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CHEFS-D'ŒUVRE
DU
ROMAN CONTEMPORAIN

ROMANCISTS

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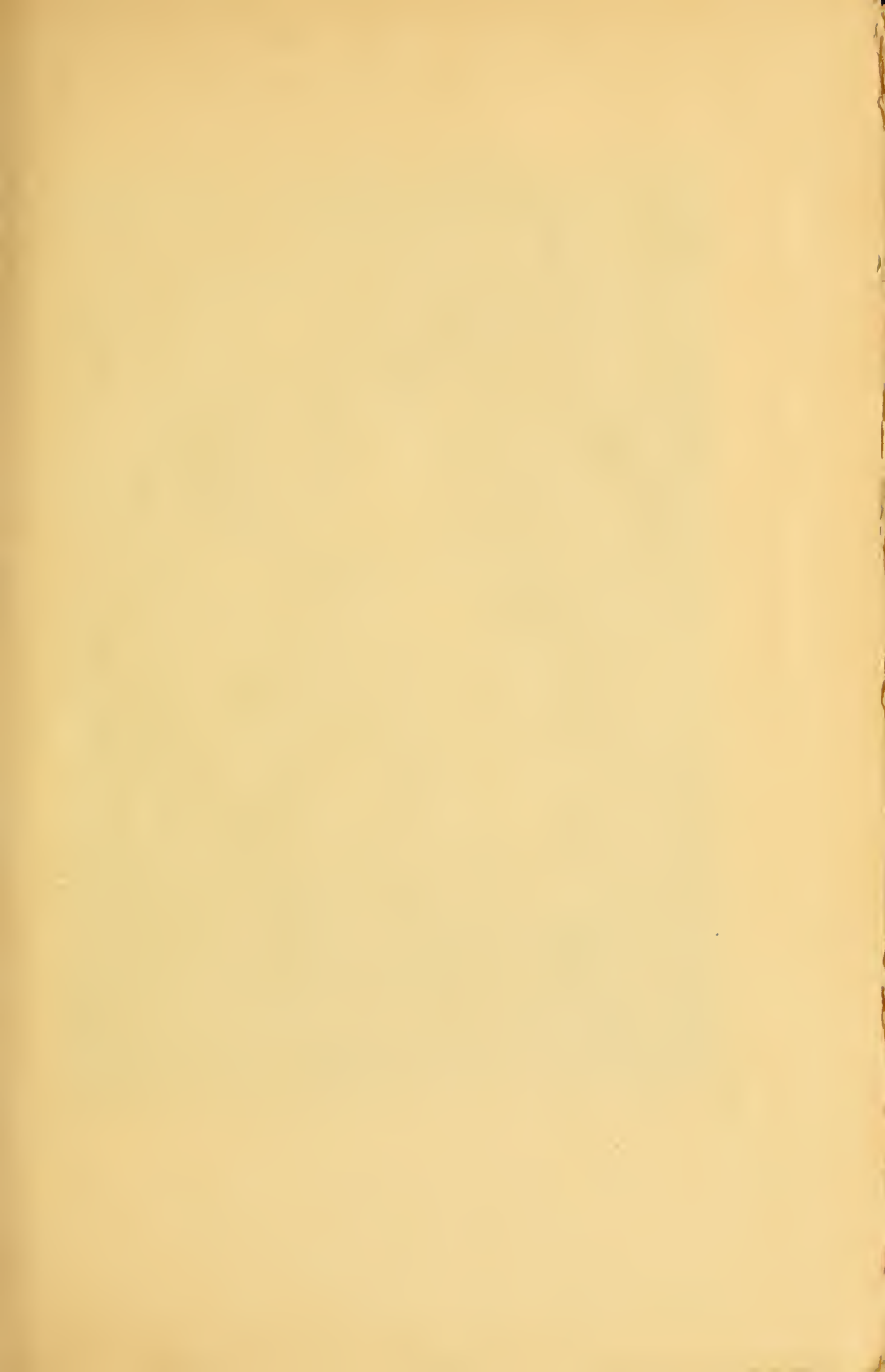
NUMBER 512

THE ROMANCISTS

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE

RAPHAEL







Chapter XXXV

At the very moment when I was taking the spring which would have forever buried us in the waters, I felt her head fall like the weight of a dead thing on my shoulder, and her knees gave way under her body.

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DU ROMAN
CONTEMPORAIN

RAPHAEL

ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE

OF THE ACADEMIE FRANÇAISE

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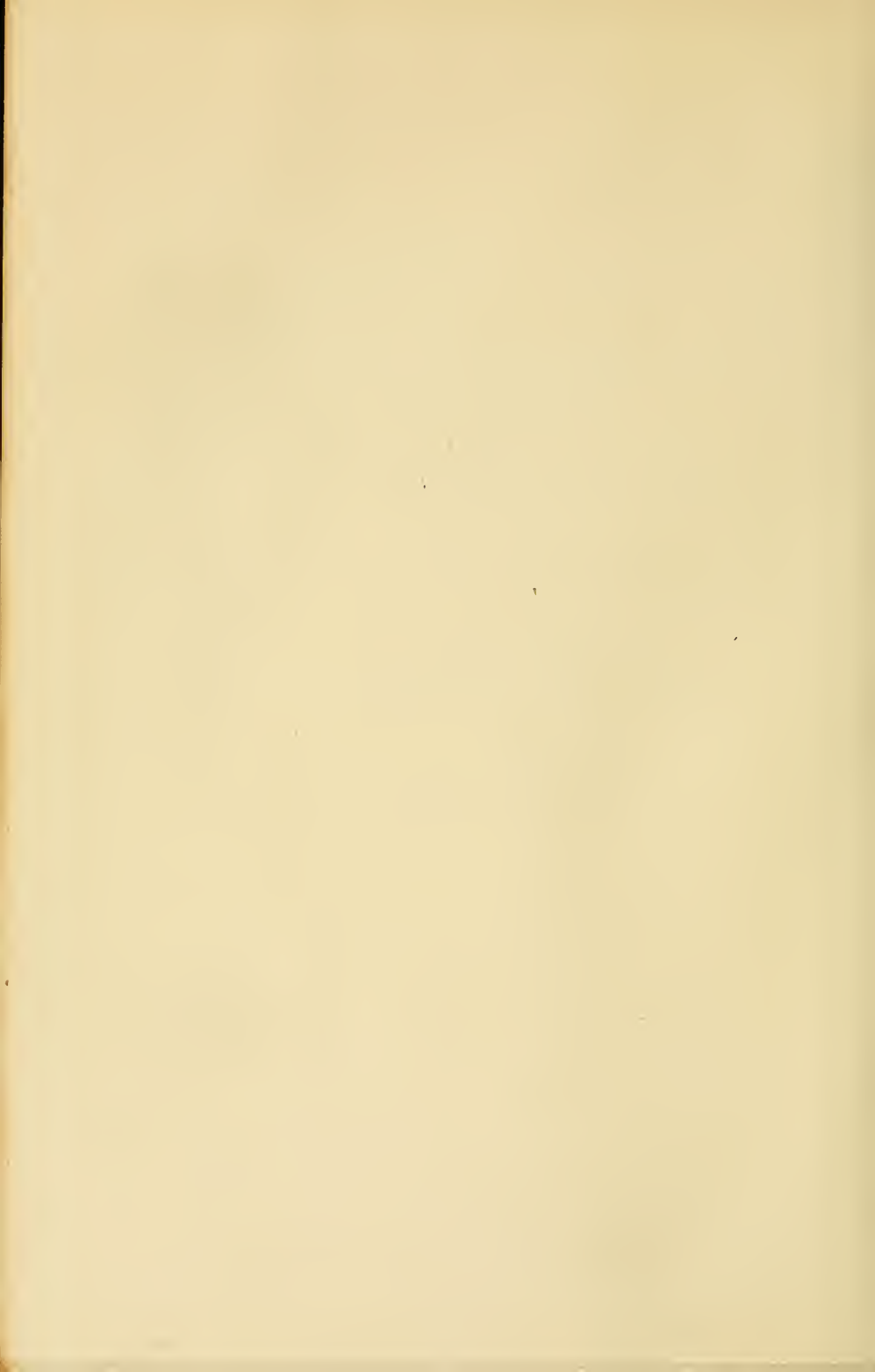
WILLIAM WALTON

THE ETCHINGS ARE BY

EUGENE-ANDRE CHAMPOLLION

AND DRAWINGS BY

ADOLPHE-CHARLES SANDOZ



TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IN RAPHAEL, as in *Graziella* and in the *Confidences*, Lamartine has been accused of putting his own personality too much in evidence, and of turning his own most intimate experiences to literary and commercial uses. In the hero of this romance have been recognized the traits and many of the experiences of the author himself; in the figure of Julie reappears the young Creole whom he loved and celebrated under the name of Elvire; the scenes in the valley of Aix, on the lake of Bourget, and in Paris, are transcripts of events in the author's own life. The present work is, indeed, a fragment of the *Confidences*, a continuation of the episode of *Graziella*,—the author's experience with this pretty cigar-maker—not coral-fishermid, as he called her—being given to Raphael. Under the romantic traits of this young man, named by his friends after the painting which was long supposed to be a portrait of the artist, Lamartine has presented an idealized figure of his own youth, much of the languid and melancholy grace of which remained with him through life. At the baths

vii

of Aix he first met Elvire, a creole of San Domingo, educated at the establishment of the Legion of Honor, and married at the age of seventeen to an old man. In 1817, he followed her to Paris, and two years later returned in her company to Aix, where she died. Her memory inspired some of his best verses in the *Méditations*, among others the *Lac* and the *Crucifix*, and the success of this volume, published in 1820, was extraordinary,—a generation equally weary of the monotonous style of the eighteenth century and of the cynical and sceptical mood of Lord Byron welcoming with enthusiasm the melancholy and romantic notes of the poet's love, and the art with which he associated the passions of the human soul with the aspects of nature—as in the present work. Nevertheless, it was this volume of *Méditations* which, when timidly carried to Firmin Didot by the author, was received with the celebrated criticism here repeated by M. D—— to Raphael. Very much of the latter's experiences after the pretty visit to Les Charmettes is also autobiographical,—his reception in Paris by the family of Julie, his acquaintance with the most celebrated political and literary men of the day, his studies, his aptitudes, and his personal preferences among the great historians and orators. Unlike Raphael, however, Lamartine refused to be discouraged, and in the last chapters of the romance fiction replaces this chronicle of actualities.

RAPHAEL

PROLOGUE

The real name of the friend who wrote these pages was not Raphael. This we, his other friends and I, gave him often in sport, because in his boyhood he much resembled a youthful portrait of Raphael, which may be seen in the Barberini Gallery at Rome, in the Pitti Palace in Florence, and in the Museum of the Louvre at Paris. We gave him also this name because this youth had for the distinctive trait of his character so lively a sentiment of the beautiful in nature and in art that his soul was only, as it were, a shadowing forth of the beauty, material or ideal, scattered through the works of God and man. This feeling sprang from a sensibility so exquisite that it became in him almost morbid until time had somewhat dulled it; we would sometimes say, in allusion to that malady of nostalgia, or homesickness, that he was heaven-sick! And he would smile and agree with us.

This love of the beautiful rendered him unhappy; in another situation it might have made him illustrious. Had he held a brush, he would have painted Virgins of

Foligno ; had he managed a chisel, he would have sculptured the Psyche of Canova ; had he known the language in which sounds are written, he would have noted the aërial complaints of the sea-wind among the needles of the Italian pines, or the breathing of a sleeping girl who dreams of one she will not name. If he had been a poet, he would have penned the apostrophes of Job to Jehovah, the stanzas of Tasso's "Erminia," the conversation, under the moon, of Romeo and Juliet, or the portrait of Haidee by Lord Byron.

He loved not less the good than the beautiful, but he loved virtue not because it was holy, but above all because it was beautiful. Though not ambitious by character, he would have been so in imagination. Had he lived in those ancient republics in which man obtained his full development in liberty, as the unfettered body develops itself in the open air and in full sunshine, he would have aspired to all eminence, like Cæsar, he would have spoken like Demosthenes, he would have died like Cato. But his humble, ungracious, and obscure destiny restricted him, in spite of himself, to idleness and contemplation. He had wings to spread, and no surrounding air to bear them up. He died young, devouring with his eyes that space which he was never to traverse. His own individual world was his dream. May he have realized it at least in his heaven !

Do you know that portrait of Raphael as a youth of which I have just spoken ? It is the face of a boy of

sixteen, somewhat pale, a little darkened by the Roman sun, but on whose cheeks still blooms the soft down of childhood. A glancing ray of light seems to play on the velvet of the skin. The youth rests his elbow on the table, the forearm is brought up to support the head which reposes in the palm of the hand ; the fingers, admirably modelled, make slight, pale impressions on the chin and the cheek. The mouth is fine, melancholy, and thoughtful ; the nose is slender between the eyes and slightly tinged with blue, as though the azure of the veins shone through the delicate skin ; the eyes of a dark, heavenly blue, similar to that of the sky of the Apennines before the dawn ; their gaze is directed forward, but with a slight inclination toward the sky, as though they looked always a little higher than nature. They are filled with light to their depths, but a liquid lustre, like rays dissolved in dew or in tears. The forehead is slightly arched ; under the fine skin we may almost fancy we trace the muscles which mark the passage of thought : the temples seem to reflect ; the ear, to listen. The dark hair, unskilfully cut for the first time by the scissors of some companion of the atelier, or of a sister, casts some shadow on the hand and the cheek. A little flat cap of black velvet covers the top of the hair and falls over toward the front. When you pass before this portrait, you become thoughtful and sad, without in the least knowing why. It is genius in its infancy, pausing thoughtful on the threshold of its destiny before

entering. It is a soul at the door of life. What will become of it? Well, add six years to the age of this dreaming child,—accentuate these features, tan slightly this skin, wrinkle the forehead, thicken the hair, dim a little this clear regard, sadden the mouth, give height to the figure, more relief to the muscles; let this costume of Italy of the time of Leo X. be exchanged for the sombre habit of a young man brought up in the simplicity of the plains, who only asks of his garments that they clothe him decently; preserve a certain thoughtful or suffering languor in every attitude, and you will have a perfectly recognizable portrait of our “Raphael” at the age of twenty years.

His family was poor, though anciently established in the mountains of Forez, where it had its parent stem. His father had abandoned the sword for the plough, like the gentlemen of Spain. He maintained for his sole dignity honor, which outvalues them all. His mother was a woman still young and handsome, who might have passed for his sister, so much she resembled him. She had been bred in the luxury and in the elegance of a capital. Of this, she had preserved that perfume of language and of manners which never evaporates, like the odor of the rose pastilles of the seraglio in the crystal in which they are preserved.

Secluded in these mountains with the loved husband of her choice and with the children in whom all her affections and all her maternal pride were centred, she

had nothing to regret. She had closed the fair book of her youth at these three words,—God, husband, children. Raphael was in particular her favorite. She would have procured for him the destiny of a king; alas! she had nothing but her own heart with which to raise him up. Under the hand of destiny, all their little fortune and all her dreams had more than once crumbled to their very foundations.

Two righteous old men, pursued by persecution some time after the Terror for I know not what religious opinions, tinctured with mysticism and foretelling a renovation of the age, had sought refuge in these mountains. They received sanctuary in her house. They conceived a great affection for Raphael, then on his mother's knees; they announced to him something concerning himself of which I am ignorant, they pointed out to him a star; they said to the mother: "Watch over this child with all your heart." A mother loves so much to believe! She reproached herself with her credulity, for she was very pious; but she believed them. This credulity supported her under many trials; but it led her to make efforts beyond her powers to educate Raphael, and it ultimately deceived her.

I had known Raphael since he was twelve years old. After his mother, it was I whom he loved the most. After the conclusion of our studies, we met again in Paris, then in Rome. He had been taken by one of his father's relatives to the latter city for the purpose of

transcribing with him some manuscripts in the Vatican library. There he had acquired a passion for the language and the genius of Italy. He spoke Italian better than his mother-tongue. Sometimes, at evening, he would improvise under the pines of the Villa Pamphili, in face of the setting sun and in the presence of the mouldering remains of antique Rome scattered in the plain, stanzas that made me weep. But he never wrote. "Raphael," would I sometimes say to him, "why do you not write?"

"Bah!" he would say to me, "does the wind write what it chants in the rustling leaves over our heads? Does the sea write down the sighing on its shores? Nothing is really fine that is written down; that which is the nearest divine in the heart of man never issues forth. The instrument is of flesh; the note is fire. What would you have! Between what is felt and what one expresses," he would add, sadly, "there is the same distance as between the soul and the twenty-four letters of the alphabet,—that is to say, an infinite distance. Would you render with a reed flute the harmony of the spheres?"

I left him to meet him again in Paris. He was then vainly endeavoring, aided by his mother's interest, to procure some active situation in which he might find relief from the burden of his soul and the oppression of his fate. Young people of his own age sought his society, and women looked at him graciously as he passed them in the streets. But he never went into society, and of all women he loved only his mother.

Suddenly we lost sight of him for three years; we afterward learned that he had been seen in Switzerland, in Germany, and in Savoy, and, later, one winter passing a portion of his nights on a bridge or on one of the quays of Paris. His appearance betrayed extreme destitution. It was not till many years later that we learned more. Although absent, we thought of him constantly; his was one of those natures which forbid you to forget them.

At last, chance reunited us after an interval of twelve years, in this manner. I had inherited an estate in his province; I went there to dispose of it. I inquired after Raphael. I was told that he had lost his father, his mother, and his wife within the space of some years; that reverses of fortune had followed these afflictions, and that there remained to him of the little domain of his fathers only an old, square tower, half dismantled, on the edge of a ravine, the garden, the orchard, the meadow in the ravine, and five or six arpents of unproductive land. These he cultivated himself with two miserable cows; he was to be distinguished from the peasants, his neighbors, only by the books which he carried into his field, and of which he might be seen often holding one in one of his hands whilst the other grasped the handle of the plough. But for some weeks now he had not been seen to issue from his poor house. It was thought that he had, perhaps, departed on one of those long journeys of several years' duration. "It would be a

pity," said the neighbors, "for every one in the vicinity loves him. Although poor, he contrives to do as much good as a rich man. There is many a warm piece of covering in the surrounding country which has come from the wool of his sheep. In the evenings he teaches the little children of the surrounding hamlets to write, to read, and to draw. He warms them at his hearth, he gives them his bread, and yet God knows whether he has anything left for himself when the harvests are bad, as they are this year."

It was thus that all spoke of Raphael. I wished to at least see the residence of my old friend, and was conducted to the foot of the little hill on the summit of which stood his blackened tower, flanked by some low stables in the midst of a group of box-trees and hazel-trees. I crossed on the trunk of a tree the almost dried-up bed of the torrent which rolled down the ravine. I climbed up by a steep path, the stones of which rolled down under my feet; two cows and three sheep were grazing on the barren sides of the hillock under the care of an old servant, almost blind, who was telling his beads, seated on an ancient stone escutcheon which had fallen from the arch of the doorway.

He told me that Raphael had not gone away, but that he had been ill for the last two months, and that it was very evident that he would never leave his tower but to go to the church-yard; and this cemetery he indicated to me with his withered hand on the opposite hill. "Can

Raphael be seen?" I asked him. "Oh! yes," said the old man, "go up the steps and pull the string of the latch of the great hall-door on the left. You will find him stretched on his bed, as gentle as an angel,—as simple as a child!" added he, drawing the back of his hand across his eyes.

I climbed up the long, steep and worn-out stairway on the exterior of the tower. The steps terminated at a landing-place covered by some timber-work and a little roof, the broken tiles of which strewed the stone steps. I pulled the cord of the door on my left and entered. Never shall I forget the sight. The chamber was vast, occupying all the space between the walls of the tower. It was lighted by two large windows with stone cross-bars, the dusty and broken panes being set, lozenge-shaped, in lead. The ceiling was formed of great beams, blackened by smoke; the floor was paved with bricks, and in a high chimney, with roughly fluted wooded jambs, an iron pot filled with potatoes was suspended over a bough that was burning at one end. There was no other furniture in the chamber than two high-backed wooden chairs covered with an ash-colored stuff, the original color of which it was impossible to determine; a large table half covered with an unbleached linen table-cloth in which a loaf of bread was wrapped, the other half being strewn pell-mell with papers and books, and, finally, a bed with worm-eaten columns and its blue serge curtains looped back to admit the air from

the open window and permit the sunshine to play on the coverlid.

A man who was still young, but attenuated by consumption and want, was seated on the edge of the bed, occupied, at the moment I opened the door, in throwing crumbs of bread to a cloud of little swallows and sparrows whirling around his feet, over the floor.

The birds flew away at the sound of my steps, and perched themselves on the cornice of the room or on the columns and the tester of the bed. I recognized Raphael through all his paleness and meagreness. His countenance, in losing its youthfulness, had lost none of its character; it had only changed the quality of its beauty. It was now that of death. Rembrandt would have sought for no other type for his Christ in the Garden of Olives. His black hair descended in curls on his shoulders, like that of a laborer after the sweat of the day. His beard was long, but growing with a natural symmetry that left visible the graceful curves of the lips and the prominence of the cheeks,—the arch of the eyes, the contour of the nose, the thoughtful concavity of the temples, the whiteness of the skin, were all visible. His shirt, open at the chest, displayed his muscular though emaciated body, which might still have lent majesty to his stature if his weakness had permitted him to stand upright.

He recognized me at the first glance, made one step forward with extended arms to embrace me, and then sank down again on the edge of the bed. I hastened to

him. We first wept, then talked together. He related to me all his life, always mutilated by fortune or by death, at the moment when he thought himself about to gather the flower or the fruit; the death of his father, that of his mother, that of his wife and his child, then his financial reverses, the forced sale of the paternal domain, then his retirement to the last, tottering roof of his family, where he had for companion only the old cowherd who served him without wages for the love he bore his family, and, finally, his consuming languor which would carry him away, he said, with the autumnal leaves, and lay him in the church-yard by the side of those he had loved. His sensitive imagination revealed itself even in this contemplation of death. It might be seen that he would, in his ideas, communicate it to the grass and the flowers which would bloom on his grave.

“Do you know what grieves me the most?” said he to me, pointing to the row of little birds perched on the top of his bed; “it is to think that, next spring, these poor little ones, of whom I have made my latest friends, will seek me in vain in my tower, and that they will no longer find the broken pane through which to fly into my chamber, or the little flocks of wool from my mattress on the floor with which to make their nests. But the nurse, to whom I leave my small worldly goods, will take care of them as long as she lives,” he resumed, as if to console himself, “and after her—well!—God!

“‘To the nestlings of the little birds He giveth food.’”

He was touched when speaking of these little creatures. It was evident that his tenderness of soul, repulsed or separated from the affairs of men, had been transferred to the dumb animals. "Do you expect to spend any length of time in our mountains?" he asked me. "Yes," I replied. "Well, so much the better," he returned, "you can close my eyes for me, and you can see that my grave is dug as near as possible to those of my mother, my wife, and my child."

He asked me afterward to bring to him a large chest of carved wood which was hidden under a sack of Indian corn in a corner of the chamber. I placed the chest upon the bed. He drew from it a great quantity of papers which he tore up in silence for half an hour, and then asked his nurse to sweep them into the fire. There were verses in all languages, and innumerable pages of fragments separated by dates, like memoranda. "Why should you burn all those?" I timidly suggested; "has not man a moral inheritance to leave, as well as a material one, to those who come after him? You are there burning, perhaps, certain thoughts and sentiments which might have quickened a soul?"

"Let me do it," he replied, "there are enough tears in this world; there is no need of our dropping some more in the heart of man. These," he added, showing me his verses, "are the foolish wings of my thought; she has moulted since, she has taken wings for eternity."— And he continued to tear up and to burn, while I looked

out on the arid landscape through the broken glass of the window.

At length, he called me again to the bedside. "Here," said he, "preserve only this one little manuscript, I have not the courage to burn it. After my death, my nurse would make bags for her seeds with it. I would not that the name with which it is filled should be profaned. Take it away, keep it until you hear that I am dead. After that, you may burn it, or you may preserve it until your old age, to think of me sometimes as you glance over it."

I took the roll of paper, I hid it under my coat and went away, promising myself to return the next day and every day to soothe the last moments of Raphael with the care and the discourses of a friend. I encountered in descending the staircase about twenty little children who were ascending, their sabots in their hands, to take their lessons, which he gave them even on his deathbed, and a little farther, the village curé, who was going to pass the evening with him. I bowed to the priest with respect. He saw my reddened eyes, and he returned my salute with a sorrowful intelligence.

The next day, I returned to the tower. Raphael had died during the night. The church-bell of the neighboring village was commencing to toll for the funeral. The women and the little children came out from their doors and wept together as they looked toward the tower. In a little green field near the church two men were

digging in the earth, and hollowing a grave at the foot of a cross! ——

I drew near to the door: a cloud of swallows were flying and crying around the open windows, entering and coming out again without ceasing, as though some one had robbed their nests.

I understood later, in reading these pages, why he surrounded himself with these birds, and what memories they stirred in him even to his dying day.

I

There are certain localities, climates, seasons, hours, outward circumstances, so much in harmony with certain impressions of the heart that nature seems to be a part of the soul, and the soul of nature, and that if we separate the stage from the drama, and the drama from the stage, the scene fades and the sentiment vanishes. If we take the chalk cliffs away from René, the wild savannahs from Atala, the mists of Suabia from Werther, the waves filled with sunshine, and the hillsides sweating with torrid heat, from Paul and Virginia, we can comprehend neither Chateaubriand nor Bernardin de Saint-Pierre nor Goethe. Places and events are connected by an intimate tie, for nature is the same in the heart of man as in his eyes. We are sons of the earth. It is the same life that flows in her sap and in our blood. All that the earth, our mother, seems to feel and to express to our eyes in her forms, in her aspects, in her physiognomy, in her melancholy, or in her splendor, finds an echo within us. We cannot perfectly comprehend a sentiment save in the spot in which it was first conceived.

II

At the entrance of Savoy, that natural labyrinth of deep valleys which descend like so many beds of torrents from the Simplon, from the Saint-Bernard, and from Mont Cenis toward Switzerland and France, a great valley, wider and less shut in, separates at Chambéry from the Alpine cluster and carries its hollow bed of verdure, of streams and of lakes, toward Geneva and Annecy, between the Mont du Chat and the mural mountains of Beauges.

On the left, the Mont du Chat uprears for two leagues against the sky a high, sombre, uniform line, without undulations, along the summit. You would say it was an immense rampart levelled by the engineer's line. Only at its eastern extremity two or three sharp teeth of gray rocks interrupt the geometrical monotony of its form, and recall us to the fact that it was not the hand of man, but of God, that was able to pile up these masses. Toward Chambéry, the foot of the mountain descends with a certain gentleness into the plain. It forms, in descending, terraces and slopes covered with fir-trees, walnuts, and chestnuts embraced by clinging vines. Through this luxurious and almost wild vegetation may be seen from distance to distance the white country-houses, the tall spires of the poor villages, or the old

black battlemented towers of the castles of another age. Lower down, the plain, which was formerly a vast lake, preserves the hollow form, the indented shores, and advanced promontories of its ancient form. Only, there may be seen there now in place of the waters the greenish or yellowish waves of the poplars, the meadows, or the harvests. Some plateaus, somewhat more elevated, and which were formerly islands, swell up in the midst of this marshy valley, and support thatched houses half hidden among the foliage. Beyond this dried-up basin, the Mont du Chat, more naked, steeper and harsher, plunges perpendicularly its rocky feet into the waters of a lake bluer than the firmament into which it plunges its head. This lake, of about six leagues in length and of a width which varies from one to three leagues, is steeply walled in on the side of France. On that of Savoy, on the contrary, it insinuates itself without obstruction into the creeks and into the little gulfs between the hill-sides covered with foliage, with trellises, with high vines and with fig-trees which dip their leaves into its waters. It disappears from sight at the foot of the rocks of Châtillon; these rocks open to let the overflow of its waters pass into the Rhône. The abbey of Haute-Combe, the burial-place of the princes of the house of Savoy, stands on a counterfort of granite on the north side and throws the shadow of its vast cloisters on the waters of the lake. Screened all through the day from the sun by the wall of the Mount du Chat, this edifice

recalls to the mind by the obscurity which environs it that eternal night for which it is the threshold for the princes descended from the throne into its vaults. Only, toward evening, a ray of the setting sun strikes it and plays for a moment on its walls as if to show to men the gate of life, at the end of their day. A few fishing-boats without sails glide silently over the profound waters under the cliffs of the mountain. The age of their planking serves to confound them in color with the sombre tone of the rocks. Eagles with grayish plumage hover without ceasing over the rocks and over the barks as if to rob the nets of their prey, or to swoop down on the fishing-birds which follow the wake of these boats along the shore.

III

The little town of Aix, in Savoy, all steaming, rustling, and odorous with the streams from its hot and sulphur springs, is seated, at a little distance, terraced on the side of a large and steep hill covered with vines, meadows, and orchards. A long avenue of century-old poplars, like those interminable rows of cypresses which in Turkey lead to the cemeteries, connects the town with the lake. To the right and the left of this road, the meadows and fields, traversed by the rocky and often dry beds of the

mountain torrents, are shaded by gigantic walnut-trees upon whose boughs vines as strong as those wild ones of America hang their branches and their clusters. In the distance may be perceived through the openings of the view, under these walnut-trees and under these vines, the blue lake which sparkles or which pales according to the clouds or the hour of the day.

When I arrived at Aix, the crowd had already left it. The hotels and salons which are crowded during the summer with strangers and idlers were all closed. There remained only a few poor infirm ones seated in the sun at the doors of the cheapest class of inns, and some hopeless invalids dragging along their feeble footsteps, in the heat of the day, over the withered leaves which had fallen in the night from the poplars.

IV

The autumn was mild, but had set in early. It was the season in which the leaves, smitten by the morning frosts and colored for a moment with reddish tints, fell in showers from the vines, the cherry and the chestnut trees. The mists spread themselves like great nocturnal inundations, even up to high noon, in all the beds of the valleys, letting appear above their surface only the half-drowned summits of the highest poplars in the plain, the

hills elevated like islands and the mountain peaks like capes, or like rocks overhanging the ocean. The warm winds of noon swept away all this foam of the earth when the sun had mounted high in the heavens. These winds, engulfed in the gorges of these mountains and dashed about by these rocks, these waters and these trees, had sonorous murmurs, sorrowful, melodious, powerful, or imperceptible, which seemed to traverse in a few minutes all the gamut of joys, of forces, or of the melancholies of nature. The soul was stirred by them to its very depth. Then they vanished, like the conversation of celestial spirits who had passed by and gone on. Silences, such as the ear never perceives elsewhere, succeeded, and lulled in you everything, even the sound of your own breathing. The sky resumed its almost Italian serenity. The Alps lost themselves in a firmament without number and without limit; the drops from the dissolving mists of the morning fell pattering on the dead leaves, or shone like sparks in the meadows. These hours were brief. The fresh and bluish shadows of the evening glided swiftly on, unfolding like shrouds on these horizons which had but just glowed with their last sunshine. All nature seemed to die, but as expires youth and beauty, in all grace and in all serenity.

Such a country, such a season, such nature, such youth and such languor in all things around me, were in marvellous consonance with my own languor. They increased it in giving it an additional charm. I sank

into abysses of melancholy. But this melancholy was living, so full of thoughts, of impressions, of intimate communications with the infinite, of the twilight of the soul, that I could not desire to withdraw from it. A human malady, but a malady of which the consciousness is an allurements instead of being a pain, and in which death appears but as a voluptuous vanishing into the infinite. I resolved to deliver myself up to it entirely, to abstain from all society that could distract me from it, to envelop myself in silence, solitude, and reserve, in the midst of that world which I should there find; my isolation of mind should be a shroud through which I would no longer see man, but only nature and God.

In passing through Chambéry, I had seen my friend Louis de ——. I had found him in the same mood in which I was myself,—disgusted with the bitterness of life, his genius unappreciated, his soul thrown back upon itself, his body worn out by the mind. He had indicated to me a quiet and isolated house in the upper part of the town of Aix, where invalids were admitted to board. This house, kept by a worthy old retired physician and his wife, was connected with the town only by a narrow pathway. This path ascended to it between the streams that issue from the hot springs. The back of the house looked on a garden surrounded by porches and trellised arbors. Beyond, the sloping meadows and forests of chestnut and walnut led up to the mountains by grassy slopes and ravines where you were certain to

encounter only goats. Louis had promised to join me at Aix as soon as he had arranged some affairs which detained him at Chambéry after the death of his mother. His companionship would be soothing to me, for his soul and mine comprehended each other, and each was disenchanted. To suffer in the same way is much better than to enjoy in the same. Sorrow has much stronger bonds for uniting hearts than happiness. Louis was at this moment the only human being whose society was not distasteful to me. I awaited him, without impatience.

V

I was kindly and graciously received in the house of the old physician. A room was given me of which the window opened on the garden and the country beyond. Almost all the other chambers were empty. The long *table d'hôte* was also deserted. At meal-times, there gathered around it only the people of the household and three or four invalids from Chambéry and Turin still lingering here. These sick people came to the baths after the crowd had departed, in order to find cheaper lodgings and a style of living that would accord with their poverty. There was not among them one with whom I could converse or contract any accidental familiarity. The old doctor and his wife were quite conscious of this.

So they apologized for it by dwelling on the lateness of the season and the too early departure of the guests. They spoke, however, with a visible enthusiasm and with a tender and compassionate respect of a stranger, a young girl, who was detained at the baths by a languor which it was feared would degenerate only too soon into a slow consumption. She had occupied alone with her maid for the last three months the most retired apartment in the house. She never descended into the common salon ; she took all her meals in her own room, and was never seen excepting at her window looking on the garden through a mantle of vines, or on the stairs when returning from a donkey ride among the chalets in the mountains.

I felt compassion for this young girl thus left, like myself, alone in a strange land ; ill, since she was seeking for health ; sad, without doubt, since she avoided the noise and even the regards of the crowd. But I felt no desire to see her, in spite of the admiration which I heard expressed around me for her grace and her beauty. With my heart full of ashes, weary of the miserable and precarious attachments of which not one, excepting only that of poor Antonine, could I recur to with a pious regret ; ashamed and repentant of my light and disorderly liaisons ; with my soul ulcerated by my faults, rendered arid by the disgust with vulgar intoxications ; timid and reserved in disposition, having nothing of that confidence in one's self which leads some men to

seek encounters and adventures, I desired neither to see nor to be seen. I thought even less of loving. I rejoiced, on the contrary, with a false and bitter pride, in the thought of having forever stifled this puerility in my heart, and of being able to suffice for myself, to suffer or to feel alone in this nether world. As to happiness, I no longer believed in it.

VI

I passed my days in my chamber, with some books which my friend had sent me from Chambéry. In the afternoons, I used to wander alone on the wild and wooded mountains which shut in, on the Italian side, the valley of Aix. In the evenings, I would return drooping with fatigue. I would seat myself at the supper-table, return to my room, and pass entire hours leaning on my elbows at my window. I contemplated that firmament which attracts the thoughts of the soul even as the abyss draws him who leans over it, as if it had some secrets to reveal to him. I even slept in this ocean of thoughts, on which I sought no shore. The rays of the sun awakened me, and the murmur of the hot springs; I plunged in my bath, and resumed, after breakfast, the same methods and the same melancholies.

Sometimes, in the evening, in leaning out of my window looking over the garden, I would see another window

open and illuminated, at a short distance from mine, and the figure of a woman leaning on her elbows like myself, who separated with her hand on her brow her long black tresses of hair to contemplate also the garden shining in the moonlight, the mountains and the sky. I could only distinguish in this half-light a pure, pale, transparent profile, framed in the black waves of hair, smooth, and clinging to the temples. This figure outlined itself on the luminous background of the window lit by the chamber-lamp. I heard also, at certain moments, the sounds of a woman's voice uttering some words or giving certain directions within. The slightly foreign, though pure, accent, the vibration a little feverish, languishing, soft, and yet wonderfully sonorous of this voice, of which I comprehended the soul without hearing the words, moved me. Long after my window was closed, this voice remained in my ear, like the prolonged sound of an echo. I had never heard anything like it, even in Italy. It sounded between the half-closed teeth like those little lyres of metal that the children of the islands of the Archipelago blow into with their mouths in the evenings, on the seashore. It was a tingling, rather than a voice. I observed it without dreaming that this voice would tingle profoundly, and forever, through my life. The next day, I thought no more about it.

One day, however, in returning home before the evening, by the little garden-gate, under the trellis, I had a nearer view of the stranger, who was warming herself in

the tempered rays of the sun on a garden-bench set against a wall facing the west. She had not heard the sound of the gate which I had closed behind me; she thought herself alone. I was able to look at her a long time without being seen. There was between us only the distance of about twenty steps, and the screen of a trellis robbed of its leaves by the first frosts. The shadow of the last leaves of the vine contested on her face with the lingering rays of the sun which it seemed to cause to move over her countenance. Her figure seemed larger than life, like those marble statues enveloped in their draperies of which one admires the stature without well discerning the form. She was covered, much in the same way, with a robe with loose and unfastened folds; a full white shawl, clinging to the figure, left visible only her two hands, the fingers of which were somewhat thin and tapering, crossed on her knee. Between them she was rolling negligently one of those wild carnations, reddish in color, which grow on the mountains under the snows, and which are called, I know not why, *œillet poète*, the poet's flower. One end of her shawl brought up like a hood covered the upper part of her head to protect her hair against the evening dampness. Sinking back in herself, the head bent over the left shoulder, the eyes protected by the drooping long black lashes against the glare of the sun, the features motionless, the skin pale, the expression lost in a mute thoughtfulness,—in everything she resembled a statue of death, but of that death

which attracts the soul, uplifts it above all sentiment of human anguish, and bears it away into the regions of light and of love, under the rays of a happy and eternal life. The sound of my footsteps on the dead leaves caused her to open her eyes. These were the color of sea-water, or of lapis lazuli, veined with brown, lozenge-shaped, somewhat closed by the drooping of the eyelids, and edged by nature with that dark fringe of black lashes, above and below, which the Eastern women imitate by artificial means in order to increase the expression by giving something of energy even to languor and of fierceness to voluptuousness. The light of those eyes seemed to come from a distance which I have never measured since in any other human eye. It resembled perfectly those fires of the stars which search you as if they would touch you in your nights, and which have traversed some millions of leagues in the heaven. The Grecian nose was joined by an almost unbroken line to a forehead high and narrow, as though compressed by intense thought; the lips were somewhat thin, slightly depressed at the corners of the mouth by an habitual expression of sadness; the teeth of pearl, rather than of ivory, like those of the daughters of the humid shores of the sea and the islands; the visage of an oval which had commenced to thin a little in the region of the temples and below the mouth; the physiognomy of a thought, rather than of a human being. And over all this general expression of reverie, a languor undecided between that

of suffering and that of passion, which never permitted your regard to leave this figure without carrying away an eternal remembrance.

In a word, it was the apparition of a contagious malady of the soul under the traits of the most majestic and attractive beauty which had ever been conceived by mortal man.

I bowed to her respectfully in passing rapidly up the garden-path before her ; my deferential air and downcast eyes seemed to ask pardon of her for having involuntarily disturbed her. A slight blush tinted her pale cheeks at my approach. I re-entered my chamber trembling, without knowing what chill of the evening had seized me. I saw, some minutes later, the young woman enter the house also, casting an indifferent glance toward my window. I saw her again, at the same hour, the following days, in the garden or in the court, without having either the desire or the audacity to accost her. I even met her sometimes in the neighborhood of the chalets, conducted by little girls who drove her donkey or gathered strawberries for her ; at other times in her boat on the lake. But I never gave any sign of recognition or of interest other than a grave and respectful bow ; she would return it with an air of melancholy distraction, and we each went our separate way, on the mountain or on the water.

VII

And yet, when I had not met her during the day I felt sad and disturbed when evening came. I would descend into the garden without knowing exactly why; I would remain there, in spite of the chill of the night air, my eyes often fixed on her window. It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to re-enter the house until I had at least seen the shadow of her figure through the curtains, or heard the notes of her piano, or the strange tones of her voice.

The salon of the apartment which she occupied in the evenings adjoined my chamber. It was only separated from it by a heavy oaken door secured by two bolts. I could hear indistinctly the sound of her footsteps, the rustling of her gown, the turning of the leaves of her book under her fingers. It even seemed to me at times that I could hear her breathing. I had, by a sort of instinct, placed the table on which I wrote and my lamp against this door, because I felt less lonely in hearing these faint movements of life around me. It interested me to imagine myself living in companionship alone with this unknown apparition which insensibly occupied all my days. In a word, I had already in secret all the thoughts, all the ardor, all the refinements of passion before it occurred to me that I was in love. Love did

not consist for me in such or such a symptom, or look, or avowal, in such an external circumstance, against which I could have been able to forearm myself; it was as an invisible miasma diffused in the atmosphere that surrounded me, in the air, in the light, in the expiring season, in the isolation of my existence, in the mysterious drawing-near of that other existence which appeared to be isolated also, in those long excursions which took me to a distance only to make me feel more strongly the unreflecting attraction which recalled me to her, in her white dress seen from afar among the mountain firs, in her dark tresses which the wind of the lake unrolled in disorder over the sides of her boat, in her step on the stairway, in the light in her window, in the slight creaking of the fir-planking under her footsteps in her chamber, in the scratching of the pen on the paper when she wrote; in the silence even of those long autumn evenings which she passed alone in reading, in writing, or in thought, within a few paces of me; in the fascination, in fine, of that fantastic beauty which I had seen too much without looking at, and which I saw again when I closed my eyes, through the wall, as if it were transparent for me!

With this feeling, however, there was mingled no indiscreet ardor, no curiosity to pierce the secret of this solitude, and the fragile rampart of our, so to speak, voluntary separation. What was to me, I said to myself, this woman, sick at heart or in body, encountered by

hazard in the midst of these mountains of a strange land? I had shaken the dust off my feet, or so I thought, at least; I did not wish to attach myself to life again by any link of the soul or the senses, still less by any weakness of the heart. I profoundly despised love, because I had known of it only its grimaces, its coquetries, its lightnesses, or its profanations, with the exception of that of Antonine, which had been only a ravishing childishness of sentiments, a flower fallen from its stem before the hour of its perfume.

VIII

Besides, who was this woman? Was she a being like myself, or one of those visions, one of those living meteors which traverse the sky of our imagination without leaving any other trace than the dazzling of the eye? Was she of my own country, or from some distant land, some isle of the Orient, or the tropics, where I should be unable to follow her after having adored her for a few days to weep for her ever after? And then her heart, was it free to respond to mine? Was it probable that such an enthralling beauty had traversed the world and reached this maturity almost ere youth had vanished without having kindled in its course some one of those upon whom her regards had fallen? Had she a father, a mother, sisters, or brothers? Was she not married? Was

there not somewhere in the world a man separated for the moment from her by inexplicable circumstances, but who lived for her, as without doubt she lived for him?

All this I said to myself to drive away the involuntary obsession, so discouraging and yet so delicious. I scorned even to make inquiries. I found it unworthy of my stoicism to strive to penetrate this unknown. I thought it more worthy, and perhaps more pleasant, to let myself dream in uncertainty.

IX

But the family of the old doctor had not the same pride of heart to respect this secret. The curiosity natural to the hosts in these houses, which derive their support from strangers, would interpret at table every circumstance, every probability, every idea, even the most fugitive, which they could gather concerning the young foreigner. Without making inquiries, and even in avoiding any attempt to lead the conversation to her, I learned the little that was known of this hidden life. It was in vain that I endeavored to turn the discourse. It returned every day and at every meal to the same subject,—men, women, children, young girls, bathers, the servants of the house, the guides on the mountains, the boatmen on the lake, she had attracted the attention,

touched and charmed everybody, without speaking to any one. She was in every one's thoughts and conversation, and was respected and admired by all. There are beings which radiate, which dazzle, which draw into their sphere of attraction all around them without thinking of it, without wishing it, without even knowing it. One might say that certain natures are like the planets, and cause to gravitate toward them the looks, the souls, and the thoughts of their satellites. Beauty, physical or moral, is their power, fascination is their chain, love is their emanation. We follow them throughout the world, and even up to heaven in which they early lose themselves; and when they are no longer seen, the eye remains blinded with radiance. We no longer look where we can no longer see anything. The vulgar even recognize these superior beings by we do not know what signs. They admire them without comprehending them, as those blind from birth are conscious of the rays of the sun, without seeing them.

X

It was thus I learned that the young stranger lived in Paris; her husband was an old man, illustrious in the last century by his researches which had marked an epoch in the discoveries of the human mind. He had adopted

this foreign young girl, whose beauty and whose genius had attracted him, in order to leave her at his death his name and his possessions. She loved him like a father. She wrote to him, every day, letters which were the record of her soul and of her impressions. Within the last two years, she had fallen into a languor which had alarmed her husband, and she had been ordered a change of air, and a visit to the Midi; the infirmities of the old man forbidding him to follow her, he had confided her to the family of one of his friends at Lausanne with whom she had travelled in Switzerland and Italy. But the change of climate had not sufficed to restore her health, and a physician of Geneva, fearing an affection of the heart, had conducted her to the baths of Aix; he was to come for her to take her back to Paris at the beginning of the winter. This was all that I learned at this time of this existence already so dear to me and of which I obstinately forced myself to believe that every detail was profoundly indifferent. I experienced a little more of that tenderness of the heart for this ravishing beauty of woman, touched in its flower by a malady which consumes the life only in rendering its sensations more acute and in stimulating the flame which it is about to extinguish. I sought to discover with my eyes, in meeting the stranger on the stairway, the imperceptible lines of suffering at the corners of her lips already a little pale, and around her beautiful blue eyes often heavy from sleeplessness. I was interested in her by her charms, I

was interested still more by that shadow of death through which I thought I saw her as a phantom of the night rather than as a reality. But this was all. Our lives continued to flow along thus brought close together in space, but as widely separated by the unknown as at the commencement.

XI

The first snows were commencing to whiten the summits of the firs on the heights of Savoy, and I had given up my excursions in the mountains. The soft and prolonged warmth of the end of October was concentrated in the hollows of the valleys. The air was temperate still on the shores and on the waters of the lake. The long alley of poplars which led to it had, at noonday, the sunlight, the swaying of the branches and the murmuring of the tops of the trees, to delight me. I passed a part of my days on the water. The boatmen all knew me; they still remember, I am told, the long voyages which I caused them to make in the most distant gulfs and in the wildest coves of the two shores of France and Savoy. The young stranger embarked also, sometimes, in the middle of the day, for excursions less prolonged. The boatmen, proud to conduct her, and attentive to the least signs of freshness in the weather,

of the clouds, or of the wind, were always careful to notify her, thinking much more of her health and her life than of their own lost pay for an idle day. Once only they were deceived. They had promised her a crossing and a safe return in a visit to the abbey of Haute-Combe, situated on the opposite shore. But they had scarcely traversed two-thirds of the distance when a sudden gust of wind, issuing from the narrow gorges of the Rhône valley, stirred up the short and foam-crested waves like that gale which the sailors call *carabinée*, which strikes suddenly and without warning, and often causes vessels to founder in turning a cape in the open sea. The little boat, its sail carried away, and maintained with difficulty afloat by the two oars of the boatman, danced about like a nutshell on the ever-increasing waves. To return was impossible, and more than a half-hour of fatigue and of danger would be required to reach the shelter of the high cliffs of Haute-Combe. Chance, or the destiny of my soul, which had ordered that day that I should be directing my undecided course over the lake at the same hour, had caused me to embark in a much larger boat, directed by four strong rowers. I was going to visit, on an island at the far end of the lake, a relative of my friend of Chambéry, named Monsieur de Châtillon. He had his château on a rock at the summit of this island. We were only a few strokes of the oars from this port of Châtillon when my eyes, which followed mechanically till lost to view the

boat of the young invalid, perceived the distress and the perilous struggle in which it was engaged in this wind-storm. We turned about with one accord, my oarsmen and I, we pushed out into the open lake, into the midst of the tempest, to go to the help of this perishing boat which again and again disappeared behind the foam-crested summits of the waves. Long and terrible was the anxiety of my soul during the hour which it took us to traverse almost the entire width of the lake and reach the boat in peril. When, finally, we attained it, it touched the shore; a long wave carried it up, under our eyes, in safety on the sands, under the ruins of the old abbey.

We all shouted for joy. We threw ourselves emulously into the water to be able to reach the boat more quickly and carry the shipwrecked invalid up on the shore. The poor boatman, in consternation, called us to his aid with gestures of affliction and cries of distress. He indicated to us with his hand the bottom of his boat which we could not yet see. When we reached it, we perceived the young lady lying in a faint at the bottom, her limbs, her body, her arms, covered with the icy water and with flakes of spray, the bust only out of the water, and the head, like that of a corpse, supported against the little wooden chest which held, at the stern, the nets and the provisions of the boatmen. Her hair floated around her neck and her shoulders like the wings of a blackbird, half submerged on the borders of a pond. Her visage,

from which the color had not entirely fled, had the calm of the most tranquil slumber. It was like that supernatural beauty which the last sigh leaves on the faces of young girls dead, like the fairest ray of life on that forehead from which it departs, or like the first twilight of immortality on the features which it wishes to leave hallowed in the memory of those who survive. Never had I seen it, and never shall I see it again, so divinely transfigured. Was death the daylight of this celestial figure? or did God wish to give me, in this first and solemn impression, the presentiment and the image of this unchangeable form in which I was destined to entomb this beauty in my memory, to see it again eternally and to invoke it forever?

We threw ourselves into the boat to lift up the dying one from her bed of foam and carry her up on the rocks. I put my hand on her heart as I would have placed it on a globe of marble. I approached my ear to her lips as I would have done to those of a sleeping infant. The heart beat irregularly, but strongly; the breathing was perceptible and warm; I saw that it was only a long swoon, the result of terror and of the cold of the water. One of the boatmen took her feet, I lifted the shoulders and the head, which reposed against my chest. We carried her thus, without her giving any signs of life, to the little cabin of a fisherman under the rock of Haute-Combe. This thatched cottage served as an inn to the boatmen when they conducted the curious tourists to

the ruins. It consisted only of one room, narrow, dark, and smoky, furnished with a table on which were placed bread, cheese, and some bottles. A wooden ladder, starting at the foot of the chimney, led up to a little low chamber above, lit only by a garret window without glass, opening on the lake. This space was almost entirely occupied by three beds which closed up with wooden doors like deep closets. It was here that the family slept. The mother and the two young girls of the household, to whom we confided the unconscious lady, retiring ourselves decently outside the door, extended her on a mattress near the chimney, lit a slight fire of straw and of furze, unlaced her, took off her garments to dry them, dried her body and her hair yet streaming with the lake water; then they carried her, still insensible, to one of the beds of the sleeping-room in which they had spread white sheets warmed by one of those stones, heated in the fireplace, of which the peasants of these mountains make use. They endeavored in vain to make her swallow some drops of vinegar and wine to recall her to consciousness. But seeing all their care lost and all their efforts futile, they broke into sobs and cries, which brought us back into the house. "The demoiselle is dead! the lady has died! there is nothing to do but to weep and to send for the priest!" they cried. The boatmen in consternation joined their cries to those of the women, and redoubled the horror of these lamentations. I threw myself on the ladder,

entered the chamber, and leaned over the bed which the twilight still illumined; I touched with my hand her forehead, it was burning; I could distinguish her feeble yet irregular respiration which lifted and lowered alternately the coarse sheet of unbleached linen over her breast; I silenced the women, and giving an écu to one of the youngest boatmen, I bade him go in search of a doctor. There was one, they told me, at two leagues from Haute-Combe in a village on one of the plateaus of the Mont du Chat. The boatman departed, running. The others sat themselves at table, reassured by the certainty that the lady was not dead. The women came and went from the chamber to the room below, and from the cellar to the chicken-house, in preparing the supper. I remained seated on one of the sacks of Indian corn by the side of the bed, near the foot, my hands crossed on my knees, my eyes fixed on the motionless countenance and the closed eyelids of the stranger. The night had fallen. One of the young girls had closed the shutter of the dormer-window. She had suspended a little lamp with a copper spout against the wall; the light from it fell on the sheet, and on the sleeping visage, like that of a taper on a shroud. Alas! I have watched since then over other visages, but they never awakened!

XII

Never, perhaps, were the regard and the soul of a young man sunk for so many long hours in such profound and strange contemplation. Suspended between death and love, I was incapable of comprehending whether the angelic figure sleeping before my eyes was an eternal sorrow or an eternal adoration that this night prepared for me in its mystery, or whether the morning would restore it to me with the reawakening and the life. The convulsive movements of her sleep, which were not strong enough to awaken her, had thrown off the covering and revealed one of her shoulders. Her hair rolled around it in great thick and black ringlets. Her neck had yielded on the pillow to the weight of the head, which was thrown backward, turned slightly on the right cheek. One of her arms had disengaged itself from the coverlid and was passed under her neck; I could see only the uncovered ivory elbow, contrasting with the gray color of the coarse chemise in which the peasant-women had clothed her. On one of the fingers of the hand, half buried in the thick hair, could be seen the gleam of a little gold ring enclosing a sparkling ruby shining in the light of the lamp. The young girls of the house had laid themselves down to sleep without undressing, on the floor. The mother had sunk

into slumber in a wooden chair, her hands and her head resting on the back. When the cock crowed in the court, they all went out, carrying their sabots in their hands, and descended the ladder noiselessly to resume their household tasks. I remained alone.

The first gleams of dawn began to appear almost imperceptibly through the chinks of the closed shutter of the window. I opened it, hoping that the fresh and balsamic morning air of the lake and the mountains, and perhaps also the first rays of the sun, might impart the influence of the general awakening of nature to this life that I could have already wished to reawaken at the cost of my own vital breath. A fresh and almost glacial wind penetrated into the room, and blew out the flame of the half-extinguished lamp. But the reposing figure remained without movement. I heard underneath me the poor women who were praying together, before commencing their work. The idea of prayer came into my heart also, as it comes to every soul which feels itself at the end of its strength, and which has need that some power, mysterious and superhuman, should come to the aid of the impotent tension of its desire. I knelt down on the floor, my hands joined on the edge of the bed, and my regard fixed on the face of the young sleeper. I prayed a long time, ardently, even to tears. These, finally, filled my eyes, and hid from me the face of her whose awakening I so passionately desired. I could have passed hours thus, without being conscious of the

flight of time or of the pain of my knees on the floor, so much was my soul absorbed in a single sensation and a single wish. All at once, in passing my hand over my eyes mechanically to dry them, I felt a hand which touched mine, and which fell softly on my head as if to put aside my hair, to uncover my face, as if to bless me. I uttered a cry, I looked up ; I saw the eyes of the invalid open, her mouth breathing and smiling, her arm extended toward me to take my hand, and I heard these words : "O God ! I thank Thee ! I have then a brother !"

XIII

The freshness of the morning had revived her whilst I prayed, my face drowned in my tears and in my hair, by the side of her bed. She had had time to see the ardor of my compassion in the ardor of my prayer. She had also had sufficient opportunity for reflection to recognize me by the daylight which now entered boldly into the room. Losing consciousness in the midst of isolation and of indifference, she had regained it in presence of the pity, the interest, and perhaps the love of a compassionate stranger. Deprived of all kindred ties of the soul in the neglected flower of her life, she had found all at once by her side the figure, the attitude,

the cares, the prayers, the tears, of a young brother, and this name had escaped from her heart and her lips in awakening at once to the sentiment of this happiness and to the sensation of life!

“A brother? oh, no, madame,” I replied, taking the hand which she extended toward me and carrying it respectfully away from my forehead as if I were not worthy of being touched by her; “a brother? oh, no, but a slave, a living shadow following your path, who will ask for no other benediction from Heaven and blessing on earth than the privilege of the remembrance of this night, and of preserving forever the image of this more than mortal apparition which makes him desire to follow it unto death, or which only can enable him to support this life!” As these embarrassed and hesitating words escaped from my lips in low tones, the rosy tints of life mounted into her cheeks, a sorrowful smile moved her lips like the expression of an obstinate incredulity of happiness, her eyes upraised toward the top of the bed seemed to follow words which answered only to her thoughts. Never was the passage from death to life and from a dream to a reality so rapid and so visible on a human countenance. Astonishment, languor, intoxication, repose, melancholy and joy, timidity and abandonment, grace and restraint, all were expressed at once on her features refreshed by the awakening, colored by youth. Her radiance seemed to illumine the sombre alcove as much as the light of the morning.

There were more words, more revelations, more confidences, more of the infinite, in this visage and in this silence, than in millions of words. The human countenance is the language of the eyes; the physiognomy, in youth, is an instrument of which passion sweeps the keys with one look. It transmits from soul to soul the mysteries of that mute intimacy which cannot be translated into any language known here below. My countenance also must have revealed, doubtless, a friend to those looks which so eagerly searched my features. My garments still damp, the brown locks of my long hair rumpled a thousand times during the night by my hands, my neck from which the cravat hung loosened and untied, my eyes hollowed by watching, my complexion pale with sleeplessness and with emotion, the almost religious enthusiasm which bowed me before this holiness of beauty suffering, the inquietude, the emotion, the joy, the surprise, the half-light of this bare chamber, in the midst of which I remained upright without daring to take a step, as if I feared to make the enchantment of so divine a dream vanish, the first rays of the sun, too, which, coming through the window, dazzled my eyes and made the still lingering tears glitter in them,—all this must have given to my countenance a depth of expression and a transparency of tenderness which doubtless she never encountered a second time in the course of a long life.

No longer able to bear the reaction of these emotions and the inward vibration of this silence, I called the

peasant-women. They came up, and broke into cries of surprise at sight of this resurrection which seemed to them a miracle. At the same moment, the physician, whom I had sent for on the previous evening, entered. He recommended quietness and infusions of some of the plants of these mountains, which calm the action of the heart. He reassured every one by saying that this malady of feminine youth disappeared often in course of time, that it was only an excess of sensibility, which caused the superabundance of life to resemble death, but which was never death, unless, indeed, inward pains should come to aggravate the moral causes and transform it into habitual melancholy and into an incurable distaste of living. While the women went to seek in the meadows the simples indicated by the doctor, and the laundress was ironing out her damp clothing in the lower room, I issued from the house and wandered alone through the ruins of the ancient abbey.

XIV

But my heart was too full of its own emotions to be interested in these anchorites. The asceticism and the enthusiasm of the first monasteries had degenerated into a profession. Later, these lives without ties with their brother-mortals and without usefulness in the world had

Chapter XXX

"A brother? oh, no, madame," I replied, taking the hand which she extended toward me and carrying it respectfully away from my forehead as if I were not worthy of being touched by her; "a brother? oh, no, but a slave, a living shadow following your path."



evaporated in these cloisters, leaving neither traces nor regrets on their tombstones. I admired here only the promptness with which Nature occupied the empty places and the habitations abandoned by man, how much her living architecture of shrubs and bushes which take root in the cement, the briars, the floating ivy, the hanging wall-flowers, the climbing-plants throwing their thick mantle over the breaches of the walls, is superior to the cold symmetry of the stones and the lifeless decoration of the monuments due to the chisel of man. More sunlight, more perfumes and murmuring sounds, more holy psalmody of winds, waters, and birds, and from the sonorous echoes of the lake and the forest, now dwelt under the crumbling pillars, within the dismantled naves, and beneath the ragged and hanging vaults of the empty church of the abbey, than formerly there were of glimmering tapers, vapor of incense, and monotonous chants of the ceremonies and processions which filled it day and night. Nature is the high-priest, the great decorator, the grand sacred poet, and the grand musician of God. The nest of swallows, in which the little ones call and salute their father and mother, under the jagged cornice of an old temple; the sighing of the wind from the sea which seems to bring to the unpeopled cloisters of the mountain the flapping of the sail, the sobbing of the waves, and the last notes of the fishers' songs; the balmy emanations which now and then traverse the nave; the flowers which shed their petals and whose stamens rain

down on the tombs, the swaying of the green draperies which tapestry the walls, the sonorous and reverberating echoes of the footsteps of the visitors over the subterranean vaults in which the dead sleep ;—all this is as pious, as contemplative, as infinite in impressions, as was formerly the monastery in all its sacred splendor. Only, men are no longer there, with their miserable passions contracted by the narrow enclosure in which they have confined but not buried them ; God is there, moreover, never so visible and so sensible as in nature,—God, whose shadowless splendor seems to enter once more into these tombs of the spirit with the rays of the sun and with that view of the firmament which the vaults no longer intercept !

XV

I was not, at that moment, enough master of my thoughts to be conscious myself of these vague reflections. I was as a man who has been just relieved of an immense burden, and who breathes with full lungs in extending his contracted muscles, and in marching hither and thither in his strength, as if he were about to devour space, and breathe all the air of heaven into his lungs. This burden of which I had just been relieved, it was my own heart. In giving it away, it seemed to me that I had for the first time conquered the fulness of life. Man

is so largely created for love, that he only feels himself a man the day when he has the consciousness of loving fully. Until then, he searches, he disquiets himself, he agitates himself, he wanders in his thoughts. From that moment, he stops, he is at peace, he has arrived at the end of his destiny.

I seated myself on the ivy-covered wall of an immensely high terrace now falling in ruins which overlooked the lake, my legs hanging over the abyss, my eyes wandering over the luminous immensity of the waters which blended with the luminous immensity of the heavens. I could not have said—the two azures being so blended at the horizon line—where the sky commenced and the water ended. I seemed to swim, myself, in the pure ether and to be whelmed in the universal ocean. But the inward joy which filled me was a thousand times more infinite, more luminous, and more immeasurable than the atmosphere in which I thus lost myself. This joy, or, rather, this inward serenity, it would have been impossible for me to define to myself. It was as an unfathomable secret which revealed itself in me by feelings and not by words; something similar, doubtless, to that sensation of the eye entering into the light after darkness, or of some mystical soul secure in its possession of God. A light, a dazzling, an intoxication without vertigo, a peace without weariness or without immobility. I could have lived on in this state as many thousand years as the waves of the lake which

rippled upon the sand of its shores without being conscious that I had endured more seconds than were required for a single breath. It must be somewhat in this manner that the consciousness of the duration of time vanishes for the immortals in heaven; an immutable thought in the eternity of a moment! —

XVI

This sensation had nothing precise, stated, or definite. It was too complete to be measured, too united to be divided by thought and analyzed even by reflection. It was neither the beauty of the supernatural creature whom I adored, for the shadow of death was still between that beauty and my eyes; nor the pride of being loved by her, for I was still ignorant as to whether I was anything in her eyes but a dream of the morning; nor the hope of the possession of her charms, for my respect was a thousand times too far above these vile gratifications of the senses to stoop to them even in thought; nor the satisfied vanity of the conquest of a woman to be displayed, for this cold vanity had never touched my soul, and, moreover, there was not a person in this wilderness before whom to profane my love in exposing it to boast of; nor the hope of linking this destiny to mine, for I knew that she belonged to another; nor the certainty of

being able to see her and the happiness of following her steps, for I was no more free than she, and in a few days fate was to separate us ; nor, finally, the certainty of being loved, for I was completely ignorant of her heart, excepting only the gesture and the word of gratitude that she had addressed to me !

It was something else ; it was this disinterested sentiment, pure, calm, immaterial : the peace of having found at last the object always sought for, never met with, of this adoration suffering for want of an idol, of that worship, vague and unquiet because there is no divinity to which to render it, which torments the soul by the supreme beauty, until finally, having found its object and the soul attaching itself to it like the iron to the magnet, it is confounded and swallowed up in it like the breath of our respiration in the waves of the breathing air around us.

And, what was strange, I felt no impatience to see her again, to hear the sound of her voice, to approach her, to converse freely with her who was already all my thought and all my life. I had seen her, I had carried her away with me ; nothing henceforward could take from my soul this possession ; near or far, absent or present, I bore her with me ; all the rest was indifferent. Complete love is patient because it is absolute and because it feels itself eternal. To have torn it out of me, it would have been necessary to have torn out my heart. I felt that, henceforth, this image was completely mine ; it was to me

what light is to the eye that has once perceived it, what air is to the lungs that have once inhaled it, what thought is to the mind in which it has once been conceived. I defied God himself to ravish from me henceforth this apparition of my desires. I had seen it, that was enough ; for the contemplation, to see is to enjoy. It almost mattered little to me whether she loved me or whether she passed before my eyes without perceiving me. Her splendor had touched me ; I remained enveloped in her rays. She could not withdraw herself from me, no more than the sun can take back to himself that with which he has once inundated nature. I felt that from this time forward there would be neither night nor cold in my heart, should I live a thousand years, for she would shine there forever as she shone there at this moment.

XVII

This conviction gave to my love all the security of the immovable, the calm of certainty, the plenitude of the infinite, the overflowing intoxication of a joy that would never be impaired. I let the hours pass without counting them, certain that I had before me hours without end. Each would give me eternally this inward presence. I could separate myself for a century from this being without that century being able to diminish

by one day the eternity of my love ! I went and came, sat down, got up again, ran and walked slowly, I trod without feeling the earth under my feet, like those phantoms which the impalpability of their aërial natures lifts, and which glide over the earth without any steps. I opened my arms to the air, to the lake, to the light, as if I would embrace nature, and thank her for having become incarnate and animate for me in a being who resembled, in my eyes, all her mysteries, all her splendor, all her life, all her delights. I fell on my knees on the stones or on the briars of the ruins without feeling them ; on the edges of the precipices without seeing them ! I cried out in inarticulate words which lost themselves in the sound of the waves of the lake ; I plunged into the azure of heaven my regards, prolonged and piercing enough to discover God himself there, and to associate Him by the hymn of my gratefulness with the ecstasy of my felicity ! I was no longer a man. I was a living psalm, crying, singing, praying, invoking, thanking, adoring, overflowing in wordless effusion ; an intoxicated heart, a wild soul, agitating, leading to the brinks of the abysses a body no longer conscious of its materiality, which believed no longer in time, or in space, or in death. So much did the life of the love that had been born in me give me the sentiment, the anticipated happiness, and the fulness of immortality !

XVIII

I became aware of the flight of time only by seeing that the mid-day sun was already touching the tops of the abbey walls. I descended the hill in bounding through the wood from rock to rock and from one tree-trunk to another. My heart beat as though it would burst my chest. As I approached the little inn, I saw in a sloping meadow behind the house the young invalid seated at the foot of a sunny wall, the inhabitants of this desert having placed some rocks against it. Her white robe shone in the sunlight against the green of the meadow. The shadow of a haystack protected her face. She was reading a little book open on her knees. At times, she interrupted her occupation to play with the little children of the mountain who came up to offer her flowers and chestnuts. When she saw me, she wished to rise to come to me. This movement sufficed to encourage me to approach her. She received me, reddening slightly, and with a trembling of the lips which did not escape me, and which redoubled my own timidity. The strangeness of our situation embarrassed us both to such a degree that we remained a long time without finding anything to say to each other. Finally, she made me an uncertain and hardly intelligible gesture which seemed to invite me to seat myself on the edge of the

hay-rick not far from her. I thought that I saw that she had waited for me, and had kept a place for me. I seated myself respectfully, but at a little distance. The silence between us still remained unbroken. It was evident that we were both seeking, without being able to find them, those commonplace words which we exchange as the counterfeit money of conversation, which serve to hide our thoughts instead of revealing them: fearing equally to say too much or too little, we retained our souls on our lips. Still we continued mute, and this silence increased our embarrassment. Finally, our downcast eyes having raised themselves at the same moment and having met in the very depths of each other, I saw such wonderful depths of sensibility in hers, and she recognized without doubt in mine so much suppressed rapture, so much innocence, and so much depth of feeling, that we could no longer detach them from each other's countenance, and the tears mounting to them from both our hearts at once, we carried our hands to our eyes as if to veil our thoughts.

I do not know how many minutes we remained thus. At last, with a trembling voice, but yet with a little constraint and impatience in the accent, she said: "You have given me of your tears; I have called you my brother, you have adopted me for sister, and yet we dare not speak to each other? A tear," she added, "a disinterested tear from an unknown heart, it is more than my life is worth! and more than it has ever yet given me!" Then, with a slight inflection of reproach:

“Have I then become a stranger to you since I no longer require your care? Oh, as for me,” she pursued with a tone of resolution and of security, “I know nothing of you but your name and your countenance, but I know your soul. A century could not teach me more!”

“And I, madame,” said I, hesitatingly, “I would wish to know nothing of all that which makes of you a being living our life, attached by the same bonds as ourselves to this melancholy world; I need to know only one thing, that you have traversed it, that you have permitted me to regard you from afar and to remember it always!” “Oh, do not deceive yourself thus,” she replied, “do not see in me any deified illusion of your own heart; I should suffer too much when the day came that that chimera took to flight! Do not see in me anything more than I am, a poor woman dying in the discouragement and in the solitude of her last hour, and who will carry away from the earth nothing more divine than a little pity! You will recognize it when I let you know who I am,” added she; “but first tell me one thing which has disquieted me since the day when I saw you in the garden. Why is it that so young, and so gentle of face, you are so alone and so sad? Why do you always take yourself away from the company and the conversation of the guests of our house to lose yourself in the unfrequented places of the mountains or the lake, or to shut yourself up in your chamber? Your

light burns, it is said, far into the night? Have you a secret in your heart that you confide only to solitude?" She waited with a visible anxiety, and with her eyelids lowered to conceal the impression that my reply might make upon her mind. "This secret," I said, "is to have none; it is to feel the weight of a heart which no enthusiasm has, up to this hour, uplifted in my breast; it is that after having tried, more than once, to animate it by incomplete sentiments, I have always been obliged to withdraw with bitterness and under circumstances in which disgust has discouraged me, so young and so sensitive, from ever loving again!"

Then I recounted to her, as I would have done to God himself, and without disguising anything, everything that could interest her in my life: my birth in a condition modest and poor; my father, a soldier of the old stamp; my mother, a woman of exquisite sensitiveness, whose youth had been passed in all the refinement and elegance of letters; my young sisters, maids of a pious and angelic simplicity; my natural education among the children of the mountains of my native country; my facility and passion for study; my compulsory idleness; my travels; my first serious affair of the heart with the young daughter of the Neapolitan fisherman; the unprofitable friendships of my return to Paris: the levities, the disorders, and the self-abasement into which these liaisons had drawn me; my desire for a military life which had been thwarted by the peace at the moment

I entered the army ; my leaving my regiment ; my aimless journeys ; my return without hope to the paternal mansion ; the melancholy which had devoured me ; the desire of death ; the disenchantment with everything, and, finally, the physical languor, the result of the weariness of the soul, which under the abundant locks, under the features and the apparent freshness of twenty-four years, concealed the precocious senility of the soul and the detachment from all earthly things of a man already ripe and weary of days.

In dwelling on this aridness, on these disgusts and these discouragements of my life, I experienced a secret joy, for I no longer felt them. A single look had regenerated me ! I spoke of myself as of a man passed away ; a new man was born in me.

When I had finished, I lifted my eyes to her as to my judge. She was all trembling, and all pale with emotion. "Ah, Heaven !" said she, "how you have made me tremble !" "And why," I asked. "Because," she replied, "if you had not been so isolated and so unhappy in this world, there would have been one link less between us. You would have felt no desire to pity another, and I should myself have quitted life without having seen the shadow of my soul elsewhere than in the mirror where my cold image is reflected !

"The story of your life," she pursued, "by changing the sex and the circumstances, is the history of my own life. Only, yours is commencing, and mine ——"

I prevented her from continuing. "No, no," I cried, huskily, pressing my lips to her feet and clasping them convulsively as if to retain them on the earth; "no, no, it shall not end, or, if it does, I feel it will end for two!" — I was alarmed at my own gesture and at the cry which had involuntarily escaped me, and I did not dare to lift my countenance from the ground from which she had withdrawn her feet. "Rise," she said, in a grave voice, but without anger, "do not adore a dust a thousand times more worthless than that in which you have soiled your handsome locks and which will fly away still more lightly and more impalpably at the first breath of autumn! Do not deceive yourself concerning the poor creature who is before your eyes. She is only the shadow of the youth, the shadow of the beauty, the shadow of the love which you will perhaps one day feel and inspire when this shadow shall have long disappeared. Keep your heart for those who are to live, and give to the dying only what the dying ask, a gentle hand to sustain them in the last steps of life, and a tear! —"

The grave, reflective, and resigned accent with which she pronounced these words caused me to tremble to the bottom of my heart. But, in lifting my eyes to her, in seeing the tints irradiated by the declining sun which illuminated this visage, in which the youthfulness of the features and the serenity of the expression seemed to augment hourly, as if a new sun had risen in her heart,

I could not believe that death was hidden beneath these brilliant symptoms of life. Moreover, what did it matter to me? if this angelic apparition was death, very well, it was death I adored. Perhaps it was only there that could be found the immense and perfect love for which I thirsted? perhaps God only showed me of it a faint light about to be extinguished upon earth to lead me to pursue it, to follow this ray even to the tomb and beyond it to the heavens?

“Do not stay dreaming thus,” said she to me, “but listen to me!” This she uttered, not in the accent of one who loves and who feigns seriousness in her voice, but with the tone of a mother, young still, or of a sister somewhat older and more experienced who counsels a brother or a son: “I do not wish that you should attach yourself to a vain appearance, to an illusion, to a dream; I wish you to know to whom you engage so rashly a soul that I could retain only by deceiving it. Falsehood has always been to me a thing so odious and impossible that I could not desire even the supreme felicity of Heaven if it were necessary to deceive Heaven to acquire it! Stolen happiness would not be for me happiness, it would be remorse.”

There was, in speaking thus, such grave candor in her words, so much sincerity in her accent, such limpid purity in her eyes, that I thought I saw immortal Truth herself seated thus, under the guise of this pure form, before the sun, giving her voice to the ear, her regard

to the eye, her soul to the heart. I stretched myself in a reclining position on the edge of the hay at her feet, leaning on my elbow, my head supported by the palm of my right hand, my eyes on her lips of which I did not wish to lose either an inflection, or a movement, or a sigh.

XIX

“I was born,” she said, “near to the natal place of Virginia,—for the imagination of the poet has given a real birthplace to his dream,—in one of the isles of the tropics. You may see it in the color of my hair, in the color of my skin somewhat paler than that of European women; you may hear it in my accent which I have never quite been able to lose. At heart, I like to keep this accent, for it is the only thing that I have brought from the land of my childhood. It recalls to me something, I know not what, of the plaintive sound of the ocean winds, during the hot hours, under the cocoa-trees. You may see it also in the incorrigible indolence of my attitudes and of my gait which has nothing of the vivacity of the French ladies, and which reveals in the soul of the creoles an abandonment and a somewhat savage nature incapable of feigning anything or of concealing anything.

“The name of my family is D'——, and my own is Julie. My mother perished in the shipwreck of a vessel while flying from San Domingo, at the period of the massacre of the whites. I was thrown up by a wave on the shore. There I was found and nursed by a negress who returned me to my father some years later. Ruined, proscribed, sick, my father brought me back to France when I was but six years old, with a sister somewhat older. He died shortly after his return, among some poor relatives in Brittany who had received us. I was adopted and given an education by the second mother, whom exile had bestowed upon me, until her death. At twelve years of age, the government charged itself with my care, in consideration of my being the orphan of a creole who had rendered some service to the State. I was educated in all that splendor of luxury and surrounded by the distinguished friendships that characterize those sumptuous establishments in which the State receives the daughters of those who die for the country. I increased in years, in precocious talents, and also, it was said, in what was then considered as beauty. It was a serious and sad grace, the flower of a tropical plant blooming for some days under a foreign sky. However, this beauty and these useless talents rejoiced no eye and no affection outside of the enclosure in which I was confined. My companions, with whom I had contracted those childish friendships which grow to be like the kindred of the heart, departed one by one to return to

their mothers or to follow their husbands. No mother recalled me. No relative came to visit me. No young man heard me spoken of in the outside world, and came to ask me in marriage. I was saddened at these successive departures of all my friends; saddened by this abandonment by the whole world, and by this eternal widowhood of the heart that had never loved. I wept often in secret. In my heart I reproached the negress who had not left me to be swallowed up in the waves of my own country, less cruel than those of the world in which I was thrown.

“An elderly man of great celebrity would come from time to time, in the name of the emperor, to visit this establishment of national education and to inquire into the progress made by the pupils in the sciences and the arts under the instruction of the first masters of the capital; I was constantly produced before him as the most accomplished example of the education given to these orphans. He always treated me, from my infancy, with peculiar predilection. ‘How I regret,’ he would sometimes say, loud enough for me to hear him, ‘that I have no son.’

“One day I was called into the salon of the superior. There I found the illustrious old gentleman waiting for me. He appeared to be as much discomposed as I was myself. ‘Mademoiselle,’ he said to me finally, ‘the years roll on for every one, long for you, short for me. You are to-day seventeen years old. In a few months

you will attain the age at which this establishment will be compelled to return you to the world. But in the world there does not appear to be any one to receive you. You are without a country, without a paternal roof, without possessions, and without friends in France. The land in which you were born is in the hands of the negroes. This privation of all independence and of all protection on your part has troubled me for several years. The life of a young girl who earns her daily bread by her own labor is full of snares and of bitterness. The homes offered by friends are precarious and humiliating to all dignity of the soul. The extreme beauty with which nature has endowed you is a light that will betray the obscurity of your situation and attract vice as the glint of gold attracts the thief. Where do you think to shelter yourself against these misfortunes or against the dangers of life?' 'I do not know at all,' I replied, 'and I have been able to see, for a long time now, that only God or death can save me from my fate.' 'Oh,' replied he, with a sad and irresolute smile, 'there is another remedy of which I have thought, but I scarcely dare to propose it to you.' 'Speak, monsieur,' I replied to him, 'you have had for so long a time for me the look and the accent of a father, that I could think myself obeying my own in obeying you.' 'A father,' he said. 'Oh, happy a thousand times he who had a daughter like you! Forgive me if I have dared occasionally to conceive of such a thing. Listen,' he said, in a voice more

grave and tender, 'and reply to me in all frankness and in all liberty of heart.

" 'My life is drawing to a close ; the grave will soon open to receive me. I have no relatives to whom to leave my only inheritance,—the modest reputation of my name, and the little fortune that my labors have amassed. I have always lived alone, solely absorbed by those studies which have consumed and dignified my existence. I arrive at the end of life and I find to my sorrow that I have not commenced to live because I have never thought to love. It is too late to return on my steps and take the route to happiness instead of that to glory, which I have unfortunately chosen ; and yet I would not wish to die without having left behind me in a memory that prolongation of our existence in the existence of another which is called a sentiment, the only immortality in which I have faith. This sentiment may perhaps be only a little gratitude. I feel that it is from you that I would wish to obtain it. But for that,' added he more timidly, 'it would be necessary that you should have the courage to accept in the eyes of the world, and for the world only, the name, the hand, the attachment of an old man who will be only a father under the name of a husband, and who will demand under that name only the right to receive you into his house and to cherish you as his child.' "

"He stopped and withdrew, refusing to receive that day my reply ; this reply was already on my lips. He

was the only man among the visitors of the place who had ever manifested for me any other sentiment than the commonplace and almost insolent admiration which betrays itself by looks and by exclamations and which is almost as much of an offence as a homage to innocence and timidity. I knew nothing of love; I felt within me only the total privation of all family ties, it seemed to me very pleasant to find them all in a father whose heart had so generously adopted me. I had found an honorable and sure asylum against the uncertainty of the existence into which I was to be thrown in a few months; a name which would confer honor on the woman who bore it and whose crown it would become; a gray head, but one grown gray under the touch of Fame, who forever rejuvenates her favorites; an age which was almost five times that of mine, but features pure and majestic, inspiring respect for time but not aversion to old age; a countenance, finally, in which genius and benevolence, these two beauties of age, attract the eyes and the affections even of little children —

“The day on which I finally issued from the establishment of the orphans, I entered, not as wife but as daughter, the house of my husband. The world gave him this name; for himself, he would never have desired that I bestowed upon him any other name than that of father. He had for me all the respect, all the piety, all the cares of a father. He made me the flattered and radiating centre of a society numerous and selected,

composed of the élite of those elders celebrated in letters, in philosophy, and in politics, which had been the glory of the last century and which had escaped the axe of the Revolution and the voluntary servitude of the Empire. He chose for me friends and counsellors among the women celebrated at that epoch for their merit and for their talents. He endeavored to turn me himself toward those attachments of the heart or of the mind that might distract and diversify my monotonous life in the house of an old man. Far from showing himself severe or jealous, he sought out with a kindly attention all the remarkable men whose society might have an attraction for me. He would have been happy if I had preferred some one among the multitude, and his preference would have followed mine. I was at once the idol and the cult of his house. This general idolatry of which I was the object was that perhaps which saved me from any individual predilection. I was too happy and too much flattered to have any time in which to become conscious of my heart; and then, too, there was much paternal tenderness in the relations of my husband,—although his tenderness limited itself to pressing me occasionally against his heart and kissing my forehead, and separating my hair with his hand. I would have feared to derange something in my happiness by touching it, even to complete it. And yet, my husband reproached me sometimes with my indifference in jesting with me; he said to me that the happier

I was, the happier would he be himself in seeing my felicity.

“Once only I thought to love and to be loved. A man whose name had been rendered illustrious by genius, powerful by his high favor with the head of the government, seductive by the glory which surrounded him, and by his figure, although he had already passed the age of maturity, seemed to attach himself to me with an ardor which deceived me myself. I was intoxicated, not with pride, but with gratitude and astonishment. I loved him some time, or, rather, I loved the illusion which I made for myself under his name. I was about to cede to a sentiment which I thought a passionate tenderness of the soul, and which was with him only a delirium of the senses. His love became odious to me as soon as I recognized its nature; I blushed for my error, I drew back my soul, and shut myself up more than ever in the monotony of my cold happiness.

“In the mornings, there were serious studies and engaging lectures in my husband’s library; I loved to serve him as disciple; in the afternoons, promenades in the great woods of Saint-Cloud or of Meudon alone with him; in the evenings, a small number of friends, the greater number grave and aged, discoursing on all subjects in complete liberty and confidence. All these hearts, chilled yet indulgent, seemed drawn toward my youthfulness by that slope from above downward which causes the heart’s sentiments of old men to descend like the

water from summits covered with hoar-frost. This was my whole life. A youth drowned under the snows of these white locks ; an atmosphere warmed by the breaths of these elders, which preserved me but which finished by enfeebling me. There were too many years between these souls and mine. Oh ! what would I have not given to have a friend of my own age, man or woman, to warm a little by this contact my thoughts which congealed in me like the morning dew on a plant too near the glaciers of the mountains !

“My husband often looked at me sadly, he seemed alarmed at my languid voice and pale face. He would have wished at any cost to have given my heart more air and movement. He continually endeavored to induce me to take part in those various diversions which might dispel my melancholy. He confided me to the care of the ladies of our social world, he gently endeavored to induce me to show myself at the various balls and theatrical representations. The lustre of my youth and beauty might there communicate to myself something of the joy and excited pride which I diffused around me. The next morning, as soon as I was awake, he would enter my chamber and persuade me to relate to him the impression I had produced, the regards I had attracted to myself, even the affections that I might seem to have awakened. ‘And you,’ he would ask me, in a tone of soft interrogation, ‘you then feel nothing yourself of all that you inspire around you? Is your

heart of twenty years, then, born as old as mine? Oh! how I would wish to see you prefer in one of these adorers around you some superior nature who would be able to complete some day your happiness by a pure love, and who would continue after me my tenderness in rejuvenating it for you!' 'Your friendship suffices for me,' I would reply to him; 'I am not suffering, I am not dreaming of anything, I am happy.' 'Yes,' he would answer, 'but you are growing old at twenty. Oh! remember that it is you who are to close my eyes for me. Grow youthful, love, live at any price, in order that I may not have to survive you!'

"He called in one doctor after another; all of them, after wearying me with questions, united in saying that I was threatened with spasms of the heart. The first developments of this affection had begun to show themselves. It would be necessary, they said, to alter the usual routine of my life, a total abandonment of my sedentary habits, a complete change of air and sky, in order to restore to my tropical nature, chilled by the fogs of Paris, the expansion and the energy which were necessary to revive it. My husband did not hesitate to sacrifice to the hope of preserving me the pleasure of having me constantly at his side. Not being able, because of his age and his official functions, to accompany me himself, he confided me to the care of a foreign family who were taking two young daughters, nearly of my own age, on a tour through Italy and Switzerland.

I have been travelling for two years with this family ; I have seen these mountains and these seas, which recall to me those of my infancy ; I have breathed these airs, soft and yet stimulating, of the waves and the glaciers,—nothing has been able to restore to me the youthfulness withered in my heart, although in my face it sometimes deceives even myself. The doctors of Geneva have sent me here as the last experiment within the resources of their art ; they have ordered me to prolong my stay here as long as there is a ray of sunlight in this autumnal sky, after which I am to go and rejoin my husband. Alas ! I would so much have desired to show him his daughter, at my return, restored to health and to youth, radiant with hope ! But, I feel that I am returning only to sadden his last days, and perhaps to expire in his arms ! Well ! ” she continued, with a resignation in which there was almost an accent of joy, “ I shall at least not quit this earth without having met that brother so long waited for, that brother of the soul whom some feeble instinct had made me long for in vain until this day, and the image of whom, anticipated in my fancy, had made all real beings indifferent to me ! Yes ! ” said she in finishing, covering her eyes with her long and pink fingers, between which I could see one or two tears trickle ; “ yes, the dream of all my nights was embodied in your features this morning when I woke ! —— Oh ! if it were not too late to live yet ! Ah ! I would wish to live now for centuries that I might prolong the

consciousness of that countenance that wept for me, of those joined hands which prayed for me, of that soul that had pity for me, and of that voice," she added, suddenly uncovering her eyes lifted toward the heavens, "of that voice which called me sister,—— and which will never withdraw from me that tender name," she pursued, with a look and an accent of tender interrogation, "neither during my life nor after my death?"——

XX

Overwhelmed with felicity, my head sank on her feet ; my mouth remained pressed to them without being able to find a word. I heard the steps of the boatmen coming to notify us that the lake was calm and that there was just enough daylight remaining to recross to the Savoy shore.

We rose to follow them. She and I walked with steps unsteady with happiness. Oh ! who would be able to describe what I experienced in feeling the weight of her body, pliant yet weakened by suffering, lean deliciously on me as if she were involuntarily pleased to be conscious, and to make me conscious myself, that I was henceforward the sole strength of her languor, the sole confidence of her feebleness, the only support by which she was still attached to the earth !

I hear still, after a lapse of twenty years since that hour, the noise of the dead leaves under our feet ; I see still our two long shadows, confounded in one, which the sunshine cast to the left on the grass of the orchard, like a moving shroud, which followed youth and love in order to envelop them before their time. I feel still the soft warmth of her shoulder against my heart, and the waving of one of the tresses of her hair which the lake wind blew against my face, and which my lips endeavored to retain long enough to kiss. Oh, Time ! what an eternity of the joys of the soul thou buriest in one such moment ! or, rather, how powerless thou art to entomb, how impotent to make forget !

XXI

The evening was as warm and as peaceful as the preceding one had been stormy and wintry on the water. The mountains were swimming in a soft purple light which made them larger and more distant by partially effacing them ; you could hardly say whether they were really mountains or only great shadows, glassy and movable, through which might be seen piercing the warm sky of Italy. The heavenly azure was spotted with little purple clouds, like bloody feathers detached from the wing of a swan wounded by the eagles. The wind had fallen with the daylight.

The long and pearly waves no longer threw any but a light little fringe of foam at the foot of the rocks, over which the dripping branches of the fig-trees depended. The slight columns of smoke from the higher thatched cottages, dispersed on the flanks of the Mont du Chat, mounted here and there, climbing against the mountain sides in order to ascend, while the cascades descended in the ravines like a watery smoke. The waves of the lake were so transparent that when we leaned over the sides of the boat we could see the reflections of the oars and of our faces, which looked back at us; so tepid that in dipping the ends of the fingers in them in order to hear the murmur caused by the ripples at our touch, we felt only caresses in the slight voluptuous thrill of the water. A little curtain like that of the gondolas of Venice separated us from the boatmen. She was lying on one of the seats of the boat, which served her for a couch, her elbows on the cushions, her body enveloped in shawls because of the humidity of the air, my cloak rolled in double folds around her feet, her face sometimes in shadow, sometimes lit up and dazzled by the last rosy reflections of the sun suspended over the tops of the black firs of the Grande-Chartreuse. I was extended upon a pile of nets in the bottom of the boat, my heart full, my mouth silent, my eyes on hers. What need had we to speak when the sun, the night, the mountains, the air, the water, the oars, the voluptuous rocking of the boat, the light form of the furrow which followed us with its

murmurs, our looks, our silences, our respirations, our souls suspended in unison, all, spoke so divinely for us? We appeared rather to feel instinctively that the least sound of the voice or of words would only make discord in the enchantment of such a silence. We seemed to glide from the azure of the lake to the azure of the high horizon of the sky, without seeing the shores we were leaving or those on which we were about to land.

I heard one of her respirations, longer and stronger than the others, issue slowly from her lips as if her chest oppressed by an invisible weight had rendered in a single breath all the aspirations of a long life. I was troubled: "You are suffering," I said, sadly. "No," she replied, "it was not a pain, but a thought." "Of what were you thinking so intensely?" "I was thinking," she answered, "that if God should strike at this instant all nature with immobility,—if that sun were to remain suspended in that manner, his disk half hidden behind those firs which seem like the eyelashes of the eyelid of heaven, if this light and this shade thus remained blended and indistinct in the atmosphere, this lake in its same limpidity, this air in its same softness and warmth, those two shores eternally at the same distance from our boat, the same ray of ethereal light on your brow, the same look of pity reflected from your eyes in mine, the same possession of joy in my heart, I should comprehend, finally, that which I have never comprehended yet since I was able to think or to

dream." "And what is it?" I asked, anxiously. "Eternity in one instant, and the infinite in one sensation!" she exclaimed, half leaning over the edge of the boat, as if to look down into the water and to spare me the embarrassment of a reply. I had the awkwardness to answer by one of those commonplace phrases of vulgar gallantry which unfortunately rose to my lips instead of the chaste and ineffable adoration which inundated my heart. It was something to the effect that such a happiness would not suffice for me unless it were the promise and the foretaste of another felicity. She understood me only too well; she blushed for me even more than for herself. She turned toward me, her countenance showed the emotion of a profaned purity, and with an accent as tender but more penetrating and more solemn than I had yet heard from her lips, she said to me, in a low voice: "You have given me great pain; approach nearer and listen to me. I do not know whether what I feel for you and that which you seem to feel for me is what is generally called love in the poor and confused language of the world, in which the same words serve to express things which resemble each other only in the sound which they produce on men's lips; I do not wish to know it; and you, oh! I conjure you, never know it! but I do know that it is the most supreme and the most complete happiness that the soul of one living being can draw from the soul, the eyes, the voice of another being which resembles it, which it needs and with which it

completes itself when it encounters it! By the side of this measureless happiness, of this mutual aspiration of thoughts by thoughts, of sentiments by sentiments, of the soul by the soul, which confounds them in one only and indivisible existence, and which renders them as inseparable as the rays of that sun which sinks and of that moon which rises when they encounter in the same heaven to mount blended together in the same ether, is there another happiness, gross image of this, as far from the immaterial and eternal union of our souls as the dust is far from the stars and the moment is far from eternity? I know nothing of it, I do not wish to know anything of it, alas! and I can never know anything of it," she added, with an accent of disdainful sadness of which I did not then comprehend the sense, enigmatical to my spirit.—"But," she continued, with an abandonment of attitude, of accent, and of confidence which seemed to give her entirely to me, "what matter the words? I love you, nature entire would say it for me if I did not; or, rather, let me say it aloud the first, say it for both of us; we love each other!"

"Oh! say it! say it! say it again! resay it a thousand times!" I cried, springing up like a madman and striding up and down on the boat which sounded and shook beneath my feet. "Let us say it together, say it to God and to men, say it to heaven and to earth; say it to the deaf and dumb elements! say it eternally, and may nature say it eternally with us!"

I fell on my knees before her on the timbers of the boat, my hands joined and my face covered by my hair. "Calm yourself," she said to me, placing her finger on my mouth, "and let me speak to you, without interrupting me, until the end." I reseated myself and was silent.

"I have said it to you," she continued, "or rather I have not said it to you, I have cried it to you with the cry of my soul in recognizing you: I love you, I love you with all the waiting, all the dreams, all the impatiences, of a sterile life of twenty-eight years, which has passed in looking without seeing and in searching without finding that which nature had revealed to it by a presentiment of which you were the mystery. But, alas! I have known you and met you too late, if you understand love as the rest of mankind understand it and as you seemed to comprehend it yourself just now by the profane and light phrase which you uttered. Listen to me still," she pursued, "and understand me well; I am yours, I give myself to you, I belong to you as I belong to myself; and I can say it without robbing in any way that adoptive father who has never wished to see in me anything but his daughter. Nothing hinders me from belonging to you entirely, and I retain of myself nothing but what you yourself bid me keep. Do not be astonished at this language, which is not that of the women of Europe; they love feebly, because they feel themselves loved in the same manner, they fear to

lose the desires which they inspire by avowing a secret which they wish to have wrested from them. I do not resemble them, either in country, or in heart, or in education. Educated by a philosophical husband, in the midst of a society of enlightened minds, disengaged from the creeds and the practices of a religion which they have undermined, I have none of those superstitions, of those feeblenesses of the spirit, of those scruples which bow the foreheads of ordinary women before other judges than their consciences. The God of their infancy is not mine. I believe only in the invisible God who has written His symbol in nature, His law in our instincts, His morality in our reason. Reason, feeling, and conscience are my only revelations. Not one of these three oracles of my life forbids me from belonging to you, my whole soul would precipitate me into your arms if you could be happy only at that price. But should we attach your happiness and mine to this fugitive intoxication of which the voluntary privation gives a thousand times more enjoyment to the soul than the satisfaction of it does to the senses? Shall we not more fully believe in the immateriality and the eternity of our love when it shall remain elevated to the height of a pure thought, in regions inaccessible to change and death, than if it descended to the abject nature of vulgar sensations in degrading itself and profaning itself in unworthy voluptuousnesses? If ever," she pursued after a short silence and reddening as if her cheeks were approaching

a fire,—“if you should ever exact of me, in a moment of incredulity and of delirium, this proof of my abnegation, know that this sacrifice would be not only that of my dignity, but also that of my existence; that my soul might, as they say, exhale itself in one sigh; that in carrying away the innocence of my love you would at the same time carry away my life, and that in thinking you held your happiness in your arms you would possess only a shadow, and you would lift up perhaps only death! ——”

We remained silent a long time. At last, with a sigh drawn from the bottom of my heart, I said: “I have understood you, and the oath of the eternal innocence of my love had been sworn in my heart before you had finished asking it of me.”

XXII

This resignation seemed to complete her happiness, and to redouble the confiding charm of her tenderness. Night had fallen on the lake; the stars of the firmament looked at themselves in it; the grand silences of nature lulled the earth to sleep. The winds, the trees, the waves, hushed themselves that we might listen to the fugitive impressions of feeling or of thought which speak in low tones to the hearts that are happy. The boatmen

sang at intervals some of those drawling and monotonous chants which resemble the modulations of the waves on the beach. This made me think of her voice, which seemed ever to sound in my ear.— “Ah! if you would mark this delicious night for me by some accents thrown to these waves and these shadows that they might remain forever full of you?” I said to her. I made a sign to the boatmen to be silent, and to moderate somewhat the sound of their oars, from which the falling drops only came in to add a musical accompaniment of little silvery notes on the water. She sang that Scotch ballad, at once marine and pastoral, in which a young girl whose lover, a poor sailor, has left her to seek his fortune in the Indies, relates that her parents, weary of waiting for the return of the young man, have compelled her to marry an old one, with whom she would live happily but for the thought of him whom she loved first. The ballad commences thus:

“When the sheep are in the fauld and the ky at hame,
And a’ the weary warld to rest are gane,
The waes of my heart fa’ in showers frae my e’e,
While my gudè-man lies sound by me.”

After each verse, there is a long reverie, sung in vague and wordless notes, which seems to lull the soul on the waves of an infinite sadness and which causes the tears of the voice to rise to the eyes; then the recital recommences at the succeeding verse with the dull and far-away

accent of a remembrance which regrets, which suffers, and which resigns itself. If the Greek strophes of Sappho are the very fire of love, these Scotch notes are the very tears of life, and the blood-drops of a heart wounded to death by destiny. I do not know who it was that wrote this music; but whoever he was, may he be blessed for having found in a few notes this infinity of human sorrow in the melodious sobbing of a voice! Since that day, it has never been possible for me to hear the first notes of this air without taking myself away like a man pursued by a shadow; and when I feel the need of opening my heart by tears, I sing inwardly to myself this plaintive refrain, and I feel ready to weep, I who never weep!

XXIII

We arrived at the little mole of the *Pertuis*, which advances into the lake, and where the boats are moored; it is the port of Aix, and is situated at half a league from the town. It was after midnight. There were upon the mole neither carriages nor donkeys to convey strangers to the town. The distance was too great for a delicate and suffering lady to travel on foot.— After having vainly knocked at the doors of the two or three cottages nearest the lake, the boatmen proposed to carry her to Aix. They cheerfully slipped out the oars from the rings

which attached them to the sides of the boat; they lashed them together with the cords of their nets; they placed one of the cushions of the boat on these cords, and they thus formed a litter, supple and yielding, on which they caused the stranger to lie down. Then, four of them, placing, each one, a shoulder under one of the extremities of the oars, they set off without imparting to this palanquin any other motion than that of their steps. I wished to dispute with them the joy of carrying a portion of this gentle burden, but they repulsed me with jealous eagerness. I walked by the side of the litter, my right hand in one of the hands of the invalid, so that she could lean on me and steady herself in the swaying of the march. I hindered her from sliding from the narrow cushion on which she was placed. We proceeded thus in silence, and slowly, by the light of the full moon, under the long avenue of poplars. Oh! how short seemed to me this avenue! and how I wished that it would conduct me thus ever, to the last step of our two lives! She did not speak to me, I said nothing to her; but I felt all the weight of her body leaning with confidence on my arm; I felt her two cold hands clasping mine, and from time to time, by an involuntary embrace, a warmer breath on my fingers, I knew that she had approached her lips to my hands to warm them. No, never did such silence contain such intimate revealings. We had been happy with the happiness of a century in an hour. When we had arrived at

the house of the old doctor, and had deposited the invalid at the door of her chamber, an entire world had crumbled from between us. I felt my hand all wet from her tears; I dried it on my lips and in my hair, and I threw myself, completely clothed, on my bed.

XXIV

It was in vain for me to turn and re-turn on my pillow, I could not sleep. The thousand circumstances of these two days reproduced themselves in my mind with such a vividness and with such reactions of impression, that I could not believe that they were finished; I saw again and heard all that I had seen and heard during that time. The fever of my soul had communicated itself to my senses. I got up, I lay down again twenty times without finding any rest. Finally, I abandoned the attempt. I endeavored by the agitation of my steps to deceive the agitation of my thoughts. I opened the window, I turned over the leaves of my books without comprehending them, I walked rapidly backward and forward in my room, I displaced and replaced my table and my chair, in order to find a good place in which to finish the night, seated or upright. All this noise made itself heard in the chamber of my neighbor. My footsteps troubled the poor invalid, who doubtless slept no more than I.

I heard light steps on the floor and heard them approach the oaken door closed with two bolts which separated her salon from my chamber ; I glued my ear against the panels ; I heard a restrained breathing and the rustling of a silken gown against the wall. The light of a lamp shone through the chinks of the door and underneath it on my floor. It was she ; she was there, with her ear to the door also, close to my brow ; she could hear the beating of my heart. "Are you ill?" whispered a voice which I should have recognized by a single sigh. "No," I replied, "but I am too happy, the excess of happiness is as feverish as the excess of anguish. This fever is that of life ; I am not afraid of it, I do not shun it, and I keep awake that I may enjoy it." "Child that you are," she said, "go to your bed while I watch, it is now my turn to watch over you!" "But you, yourself," I cried, under my breath, "why are you not asleep?" "I," she replied, "I do not wish to sleep any more, in order that I may not lose one moment of this feeling of happiness which fills me. I have but little time to taste this joy, and I do not wish to lose a drop in the oblivion of sleep. I came to sit here to hear you, perhaps, and in order to feel myself at least near to you." "Oh!" I murmured between my lips, "why are you still so far away? why is this wall between us?" "Is it, then, this door that is between us, and not our own will and our oath?" said she. "There! if your steps are only restrained by this material obstacle, you can now cross it!"

And I heard her hand withdrawing the bolt on her side. "Yes, you can now," continued she, "if there be not in you something stronger even than your love, which masters, which subjugates your passion; yes, you can overcome it," she continued, with an accent at once more passionate and more solemn, "I wish to owe nothing but to you yourself; you will find a love equal to your love; but, I have said it to you, in this love you will find also my death!"

The excess of my emotion, the impetuous impulse of my heart toward this voice, the moral violence that repulsed me, overwhelmed me, and I fell fainting, like a man wounded to death, on the threshold of this closed door. I heard her seat herself also on the other side, on the cushion of a lounge which she threw on the floor. We continued during part of the night to talk in whispering tones through the spaces between the floor and the rough wood-work of our door. Intimate words, unused in the ordinary language of men, floating like the dreams of the night between heaven and earth, often interrupted by long silences, during which the hearts spoke as much more as the words failed more and more on the lips to express the inexpressible confidences. Finally, the pauses became longer and longer, the voices fainter, and I fell asleep through utter weariness, my cheek against the wall, and my hands joined on my knees.

XXV

When I awoke, the sun, already high in the heavens, inundated my chamber with luminous reflections. The redbreasts of the autumn were flitting through the vines and currant-bushes under my window, pecking and singing; all nature seemed to be awakened, adorned, illuminated and animated before me to celebrate the day of our birth into a new life. All the noises of the house seemed to me as joyous as I was myself. I heard only the light steps of the maid coming and going in the corridor to bring her mistress's breakfast to her, the childish voices of the little mountain girls bringing flowers from the edges of the glacier, the stamping and the tinkling of the bells of the mules who were waiting in the court to conduct her to the lake or the fir wood. I changed my clothes soiled with dust and foam, I bathed my eyes sunken and red from sleeplessness, combed my disordered hair, put on my leathern gaiters of a chamois hunter of the Alps, took my gun, and descended to the common table where the old physician breakfasted with his family and his guests.

They were talking at the table of the storm on the lake, of the danger of the young stranger, of her fainting at Haute-Combe, of her two days' absence, and of the fortunate chance which had enabled me to meet her

and to bring her back the night before. I entreated the doctor to go and ask for me permission to inquire of her health and to accompany her on her excursions. He came down again with her, more beautiful, more touching, and more rejuvenated by happiness than any one had yet seen her. She dazzled everybody. She had eyes only for me. I alone understood those looks and those words with double meanings. Her guides lifted her up with exclamations of joy on the seat with a swaying foot-board which serves as a saddle for the women of Savoy. I followed on foot the mule with his tinkling bells, who bore her that day up to the highest chalets on the mountain plateau.

We passed the entire day almost without speaking, so well did we comprehend each other already completely without words. Sometimes occupied in contemplating the luminous valley of Chambéry, which seemed to deepen and enlarge in proportion as we rose above it; sometimes halting on the edges of the cascades, of which the spray, colored by the sun, enveloped us in undulating rainbows, which seemed to us the supernatural frame and the mysterious aureole of our love; sometimes gathering the last wild-flowers on the sloping meadows of the chalets, and exchanging them between us like letters forever intelligible to us only of the balmy alphabet of nature; sometimes picking up the chestnuts forgotten at the foot of the trees, shelling them to roast in the evening before the fire of her room; sometimes

seating ourselves under the highest chalets of the mountains, already abandoned by their inhabitants: we said to ourselves how happy might be two beings like ourselves relegated by their destiny to one of these deserted hovels formed by a few trunks of trees and a few planks, almost among the stars, amid the voices of the wind in the firs, and the quivering glaciers and snows, but separated from men by solitude and sufficing for themselves for a life full and overflowing with one sole feeling!

XXVI

In the evening, we descended slowly. We looked at each other sadly, as if we had left our own domains and our happiness forever behind us. She ascended to her apartment. I remained to take supper with the family and the guests. After supper, I knocked, as had been arranged, at the door of her room. She received me like a friend of her childhood found again after a long absence.

I passed in this manner all my days and evenings. I found her usually half reclining on a sofa covered with white linen cloth, in an angle between the window and the chimney; a small table of dark wood upon which burned a copper lamp was covered with books, letters received or commenced during the day, a little mahogany

tea-box which she gave me at parting, and which has never left my chimney-piece since, and two cups of the blue and red porcelain of China in which we took our tea at midnight.

The old doctor usually ascended with me to talk with his young invalid ; but after a half-hour of conversation, this excellent man, perceiving clearly that my presence contributed more than his advice and his baths to the visible re-establishment of the health so dear to us all, left us alone with our books and our conversation. At midnight, I kissed the hand which she extended to me across the table and I retired to my own room, but I never lay down to sleep until I no longer heard any sound in hers.

XXVII

During five long and short weeks, we continued to lead this intimate and delicious twofold life ; long, when I recall the innumerable palpitations of joy in our hearts ; short, if I think of the rapid imperceptibility of the hours which filled them. It seemed as if, by a miracle of Providence which did not happen once in ten years, the season as accomplice of our happiness was in collusion with us to prolong it. The entire month of October and a long half of November resembled a spring-time resuscitated from winter and which had forgotten only

its leaves in the tomb. The breezes were warm, the waters blue, the firs green, the clouds pink, the sunshine dazzling. Only the days were short ; but the long evenings over the warm ashes of her chimney brought us still closer together. They rendered us still more exclusively present to each other ; they prevented our looks and our souls from evaporating in the splendor of exterior nature. We preferred them to the long days of summer. Our splendor was in ourselves. We felt it all the more when confined in our habitation during the long dusks of the evenings and the nights of November, listening to the beating of the first storms of hail or of snow on the window-panes and to the sobbing of the autumn wind ; this rainy wind seemed to throw us still more closely together and to cry to us : “Hasten to say to each other all that has not been said in your hearts and all that should be said before man and woman die, for I am the voice of the evil days that are coming, and that will separate you !”

XXVIII

We visited thus in succession and together every cove, every bay, every sandy beach of the lake ; every summit, ridge, gorge, secret valley, grotto, and cascade walled in the fissures of the rocks of Savoy. We saw more sublime or pleasing sites, more mysterious solitudes,

more enchanted deserts, more little dwellings suspended between the abysses and the clouds on the jutting cornices of the mountains, more orchards, more milky waters foaming down the sloping meadows, more forests of firs and of chestnut-trees opening their sombre colonnades to our view and repeating the sound of our voices under their domes, than would be needed to hide a world of lovers! We left to each one of these sites one of our sighs, one of our enthusiasms, one of our benedictions. We entreated them, loudly or softly, to preserve the souvenir of the hour which we had there passed together, of the thoughts which they had given us, of the air which they had caused us to breathe, of the drops of water which we had drunk in the hollows of our hands, of the leaf or the flower which we had there gathered, of the track which our footsteps had imprinted on the damp grass; to return to us some day all this with that portion of our existence which we had left there in passing and in breathing, in order that nothing might be lost of the happiness that overflowed in our hearts, and that there might be found again all these minutes, all these ecstasies, all these emanations from ourselves, in that faithful treasure-house of Eternity where is preserved even the breath that has been drawn and the minute that was thought lost forever.

Never perhaps since the creation of these lakes, these torrents, and these granites, had hymns so tender and so fervent risen from these mountains to God! There was

in our souls enough of life and enough of love to animate all this nature, waters, heaven, earth, rocks, trees, cedar, and hyssop, and to cause them to render sighs, aspirations, embraces, voices, cries, perfumes, and flames capable of filling the entire sanctuary of a nature vaster and more silent even than that in which we lost ourselves. If a globe had been created for us alone, we alone would have sufficed to people it, to vivify it, to give it voice, word, benediction, and love during an eternity! And yet it is said that the human soul is not infinite. And who then has ever felt the limits of his life, of his power for existence and love, before an adored woman, in face of nature and time, and under the eye of God! Oh, Love! the base may fear thee and the wicked proscribe thee! Thou art the high-priest of this world, the revealer of immortality, the fire on the altar! and without thy light, man would never even suspect the Infinite!

XXIX

These six weeks were for me a baptism of fire; it transfigured my soul, it purified it from every stain with which it had been soiled. Love was the torch which in illuminating me lit up at the same time nature, the world, myself, and Heaven. I understood the nothingness of

this world in perceiving it disappear thus before one spark of true life. I blushed for myself in looking back at my past, and in comparing myself to the purity and the perfection of her whom I loved. I entered into the heaven of souls in penetrating into the eyes and into the heart of this ocean of beauty, feeling, purity, and love which revealed itself more and more from hour to hour in the eyes, in the voice, in the converse, of this celestial creature who had thus manifested herself to me! How often have I knelt before her, my face in the grass, in the attitude and in the sentiment of adoration! How often have I prayed to her, as one prays to a being of another nature, to lave me in one of her tears, to burn me in one of her flames, to inhale me in one of her breaths, so that there might remain nothing more of me in myself than the purifying water in which she had cleansed me, the celestial fire in which she had consumed me, the new breath with which she had animated my new being! so that I might become her, or that she might become me, and that God himself, in recalling us before Him, should no longer be able to recognize or to separate those whom the miracle of love should have thus transformed and commingled! — Oh! if you have a brother, a son, or a friend who has never comprehended virtue, pray Heaven that he may love thus! So long as he loves he will be capable of every devotion, of every heroism, that he may equal the ideal of his love. And when he no longer loves, there will remain

to him forever in the soul an aftertaste of that celestial voluptuousness which will cause him to turn in disgust from the waters of vice, and his eyes will be secretly uplifted toward that pure source whence he was once permitted to drink !

I cannot say how many times this salutary shame of myself seized me in the presence of her whom I loved ; but her reproaches were so tender, her regard, though penetrating, was so gentle, her forgiveness was so divine, that in humiliating myself before her I did not feel myself abased, but rather elevated and dignified. I almost thought that I experienced the development in myself, of my own proper nature, of the purity, the splendor, which was her luminous reflection in me ! I was continually comparing her with the other women whom I had known. Excepting Antonine, who appeared to me only as the artless infancy of Julie ; excepting my mother, whom she resembled in her holiness and her maturity, no woman in my eyes could bear the slightest comparison. A single look of hers seemed to throw all my past life into the shade. Her discourses revealed to me the depth, the extent, the delicacy, the refinement, and the divinity of feeling and of passion which transported me into unknown regions where I thought I breathed for the first time the native air of my own thoughts. All that I had in me of levity, of vanity, of puerility, of aridity, of irony, or of bitterness of spirit during these evil years of my adolescence, disappeared

so completely that I no longer recongized myself. In leaving her, I felt myself good, I believed myself pure. Once more I found earnestness, enthusiasm, prayer, inward piety, the hot tears which did not flow from my eyes but which mount as from a hidden source at the bottom of our apparent aridity, and which cleanse the heart without enervating it. I promised myself to never again descend from these heavenly heights where there were no vertigoes, and to which her tender reproaches, her voice, her mere presence, had the power of elevating me. It was like a second virginity of my soul imparted by the rays of the eternal virginity of her love. I could not say whether there was more of piety or of fascination in the impression which I received from her, so much were passion and adoration mingled in equal parts and changing, a thousand times a minute in my thoughts, love into worship and worship into love! Oh! is this not the very pinnacle of love; enthusiasm in the possession of perfect beauty, and rapture in supreme adoration? — All that she had said appeared to me eternal, all that she had regarded appeared to me sacred. I envied the ground on which she trod in walking; the rays of the sun which enveloped her in our excursions seemed to me happy to have touched her. I would have wished to gather apart, in order to separate it from the common air, that which she had made divine to my eyes by breathing it; I would have wished to enclose even the empty place which she had just left in

space, so that no inferior creature should ever occupy it so long as the world endured! In a word, I saw, I felt, I adored everything, and God himself, through this divinity of my love! — If life were to endure in such a condition of the soul, nature would stand still, the blood would cease to circulate, the heart would forget to beat, or, rather, there would be no longer either movement, abatement, lassitude, precipitation, death, or life in our senses; there would be no longer anything but an endless and living absorption of our whole being in another. Such must be the state of the soul at once annihilated and living in God!

XXX

What happiness! the vile desires of sensual passion were annihilated (as she had wished) in the full possession of each other's soul. Happiness rendered me, as it always does, better and more pious than I had ever been. God and she mingled so completely in my soul that the adoration of her in which I lived became also a perpetual adoration of the Divine Being who had created her. I was only a hymn of praise, and there were not two names in my hymn, for God was she, and she was God! Our conversations during the day when we halted to look, to breathe, to admire, on the sides of the mountain, on the border of the lake, or on the great roots of

some chestnut-tree at the edge of the turf bathed in sunlight, turned often from the natural overflowing of two hearts too full to that fathomless abyss of all thoughts, toward the infinite and toward that word which alone fills the infinite,—God. I was astonished when I had pronounced this last word, with the heartfelt gratitude which reveals so much in a single accent,—I was astonished to see her turn away her look or lower her eyes and conceal in the frown of her beautiful brows, or in the corners of her mouth, a pain or a sad incredulity which seemed to me to contradict our enthusiasm. One day I asked her, timidly, the reason. “Because that word gives me pain,” she replied. “And how,” I said, “can the word which contains the name of all life, of all love and of all good, give pain to the most perfect of His creations?” “Alas!” she replied, with the accent of a despairing soul, “it is because this word contains for me the idea of the being whose existence I have most passionately desired might not be a dream, and because this being,” she added, in a lower and weaker voice, “is for me and for the sages whose lessons I have received only the most marvellous but the most empty of the illusions of our thought!” “What!” I said, “your masters do not believe in a God? But you who love, can you not believe in Him? Is there then one throb of our hearts that is not a proclamation of the infinite?” “Oh!” she hastened to answer, “do not interpret as folly the wisdom of those men who have uplifted for me the veils

of philosophy, and have caused the broad day of reason and of science to shine before my eyes instead of that fantastic and glimmering lamp with which human superstitions light the voluntary shadows purposely diffused around their puerile divinities. It is in the God of your mother and of my nurse that I no longer believe, and not in the God of nature and of the sages. I believe with them in a Being, principle and cause, source, space, and end of all other beings, or, rather, who is Himself the eternity, the form, and the law of all those beings visible or invisible, intelligent or unintelligent, animated or inanimated, living or dead, of which is composed the only real name of this Being of beings, the Infinite! But the idea of the incommensurable grandeur, of the sovereign fatality, of the absolute and inflexible necessity of the acts of this Being whom you call *God* and whom we call *Law*, excludes from our thoughts all precise intelligibility, all exact denomination, all reasonable imagining, all personal manifestation, all revelation, all incarnation, and the idea of any possible relation between this Being and ourselves, even of homage and of prayer. Wherefore should the Consequence pray to the Cause?

“Oh! but it is cruel,” she added, “and how many benedictions, prayers, and tears should I have poured out at His feet since I have loved you! ——” Then, collecting herself, “I surprise and pain you,” she said; “pray forgive me: the first of virtues, if there are virtues,

is truth, is it not? On this point only, we cannot agree; therefore let us talk of it no more. You were brought up by a pious mother, in the bosom of a Christian family; you there inhaled with the air the holy credulities of the hearthstone; you have been led by the hand into the temples, you have been shown the images, the mysteries, the altars; you have been taught the prayers and told: 'God is here who hears you and who will reply to you;' you believed, for you were not of an age to inquire. Later, you put away these baubles of your infancy to imagine a God less puerile and less feminine than this God of the Christian tabernacles. But the first dazzle is still in your eyes; the real light that you have deemed you saw has been mingled, unknown to yourself, with that false light which fascinated you on entering life; you have retained two weaknesses of the intelligence: mystery and prayer. There is no mystery," she affirmed in a more solemn tone; "there is only reason, which dispels all mystery! It is man, crafty or credulous, who has invented mystery; it is God who made reason. And there is no prayer," she pursued, sorrowfully; "for in an inflexible law there is nothing to yield, and in a necessary law nothing to change.

"The ancients, in their popular ignorance under which was hidden their profound wisdom, knew this well," she added, "for they prayed to all the gods of their invention, but they never implored the supreme law,—Destiny."

She was silent. "It appears to me," said I after a long silence, "that the masters who have taught you this wisdom have, in their theories of the relation of God to man, too much subordinated the feeling to the reasoning being; in a word, that they have forgotten the heart of man,—which is the organ of all love, as the intelligence is the organ of all thought. The imaginings of man in respect to God may be puerile and false. His instincts, however, which are his unwritten law, should be true. Otherwise, Nature would have lied in creating him. You do not think Nature a lie," I added, smiling, "you who have just said that truth was, perhaps, the only virtue? Now, whatever may have been the intention of God in giving these two instincts, mystery and prayer, to the heart of man; whether He meant thereby to reveal that He, God, is the Incomprehensible, and that His true name is Mystery; or whether He wished that all creatures should render Him honor and praise, and that prayer should be the universal incense of nature,—it is most certain that man when he thinks on God feels within him two instincts, mystery and adoration. Mystery?" I pursued, "it is the work of the human reason to widen it, to enlighten it, and to disperse it more and more, without ever completely dissipating it. Prayer? it is the need of the heart to expand in ceaseless imploration, useful or useless, heard or not, like perfume under the feet of God. Whether this perfume falls under the feet of God or whether it falls back to earth, it does not

matter, it falls always as a tribute of weakness, humiliation, and adoration.

"But who knows that it is lost?" I added, with that tone of hope which, in the voice of the speaker, triumphs over even doubt; "who knows whether prayer, that mysterious communication with the invisible Omnipotence, is not, in fact, the greatest of the powers, supernatural or natural, of man? who knows whether the supreme and immortal Will has not ordained from all eternity that prayer should be inspired and be granted in him who prays, so that man himself should thus by his invocations participate in the ordering of his own destiny? who knows, in fact, whether God, in His love and in His perpetual blessing of the beings which emanate from Him, has not wished to permit them this bond with Him as the invisible chain which suspends the thoughts of all the worlds to His own? who knows, if, in His majestic solitude, inhabited only by Himself, He has not willed that this living murmur, this inextinguishable communing with nature, should ascend and descend continuously in all space, from Him to all those beings whom He vivifies, whom He embraces, and whom He loves, and from all those beings to Him. In any case, prayer is the most sublime of the privileges of man, because it is that which permits him to speak with God; and if God were deaf, we should still pray to Him; for if His grandeur lies in not hearing us, our own grandeur is in our praying to Him!"

Chapter XXXII

I wrote, in my turn, these lines which shall die with me, unknown to all; the first verses that had sprung from my heart, and not from my imagination. I read them without daring to lift my eyes to her to whom they were addressed.



I saw that my reasonings touched, without convincing, her; that her soul, somewhat dried and withered by science, had not yet opened its living springs to God. But love was to be not long in softening her religion after having softened her heart; the delights and the anguish of passion were soon to make adoration and prayer flower there, those two perfumes of the soul that burn and languish,—the one full of rapture, the other full of tears; both divine!

XXXI

In the meanwhile, happiness, solitude with another—that Eden of tender souls, the daily discovery in me of some hidden depth of my thought which corresponded with the mysteries of her own nature; this autumnal air in the mountains which preserve, like stoves heated in summer, the warmth of the sun almost till the snows come; these distant excursions among the chalets or on the water; the motion of the boat, or the gentle oscillation of the backs of the mules like that of the light and slow waves of the sea; the milk of these pastures, brought to her all foaming, morning and evening, in beech-wood cups carved by the shepherds; and, above all, that gentle excitement, that peaceful delirium, that continual vertigo of a soul which a first love lifts above

the earth as on wings and floats along from thought to thought, from dream to dream, across a new heaven, in a perpetual expanding of the heart,—all this tended to re-establish her health visibly. From day to day, she could be seen to improve. It was like a convalescence of the soul which communicated itself to her features. Her face, which at first had been slightly marked around the eyes with those dull or bluish spots which seem like the imprints of the fingers of Death, gradually recovered the fulness of the cheeks, the warm bloom, the freshness of complexion, the soft down of a young girl who has been long on the mountains and whose cheek has been touched by the cold breezes from the glaciers; her eyelids lost their heaviness, her eyes their shadow, her lips their droop. Her regards seemed to swim in that perpetual luminous mist of the soul, the vapor from a burning heart condensed in the eyes into tears which rise continually, but which this very fire dries and forbids ever to fall. Her actions recovered their strength, her movements their suppleness, her steps the lightness and the quickness of those of a child. Every time that she returned with me from her excursions and entered the court of the house, the old doctor and his family exclaimed at the prodigious change wrought in her health by twenty-four hours, and at the lustre of youth and life which beamed in her eyes.

In truth, happiness seemed to have rays and to spread around her an atmosphere in which she was enveloped,

and enveloped those who looked at her. This radiance of beauty, this atmosphere of love, are not altogether, as is thought, mere fancies of the poet. The poet has only been able to see more clearly that which escapes the blind or indifferent eyes of other men. It has often been said of a beautiful young girl, that she would lighten the darkness of a night. You would have said that Julie warmed the air around her. I lived and moved in this warm emanation of her reviving beauty ; the others felt it as they passed.

XXXII

When I returned to my own room, during the brief moments in which I was forced to leave her, I felt, even at mid-day, as if I were in a dungeon without light and without air. Even the most brilliant sun no longer lighted me, unless its rays were reflected from her to my eyes. The more I saw her, the more I admired her, the less was I able to believe that she was a creature of the same order as myself. The divine nature of her love had finished by becoming a creed of my imagination. I perpetually prostrated myself in spirit before this being, too tender to be a god and too divine to be a woman. I sought a name for her, and found none. In default of any other, I called her to myself, Mystery ; I rendered

to her, under this name, vague and indefinite, a worship which was of the earth by its tenderness, of a dream by its enthusiasm, of reality by its presence, and of Heaven by its adoration !

She had obliged me to confess, finally, that I had sometimes written verses, but I had never shown her any. She did not seem to care much, for that matter, for that artificial and set form of speech which generally impairs, when it does not idealize, the simplicity of feeling and expression. Her nature was too full of impulse, too profound and too serious, to lend itself to the formalities, the contours, and the delays of written poetry. She was poetry without the lyre ; naked as the heart, simple as primitive speech, dreamy as the night, luminous as the day, rapid as the lightning, immense as space. Her soul was an infinite gamut which no prosody would have sufficed to note. Even her voice was a perpetual song which no harmony of verse could equal. If I had lived an indefinite length of time near her, I should never have either read or written verses. She was to me the living poem of nature and of myself. My thoughts echoed in her heart, my images in her looks, my melody in her voice. Moreover, the materialistic and high-sounding poetry of the end of the eighteenth century and of the Empire, of which she had the principal volumes in her chamber, such as *Delille* and *Fontanes*, was not made for us. Her soul, which had been lulled by the melodious waves of the tropics,

was full of sorrow, of reverie, and of love, which all the voices of the air and the waters would not suffice to exhale ! Several times she endeavored before me to read these works and to admire them on the strength of their reputation ; she rejected them with a gesture of impatience, they remained silent under her hands, like broken chords whose voice we seek in vain by striking the keys. The music of her heart was only in mine, but it could never issue forth. The verses with which she should inspire me were destined to sound only over her grave. She never knew before she died whom she had loved. I was for her her brother. Little it mattered to her that I was a poet for all the rest of the world. There was nothing of me but myself in her love.

Only once, I involuntarily betrayed to her a feeble gift of poesy which she was far from suspecting, or desiring, in me. My friend Louis —— had come to pass several days with us. The evening had been filled till midnight with readings, with intimate conversations, with reveries spoken aloud, with sadnesses or with smiles. We wondered to see three young destinies, unknown to each other only so short a time before, and now united and identified under the same roof, at the corner of the same fire, hearing the distant sounds of the same autumnal storm, in a little house on the mountains of Savoy ; we endeavored to foresee by what disposal of Providence or of chance these same winds of life might disperse us or reunite us again. These distant vistas on the horizons

of our future lives had ended by saddening us all. We remained silent before the little tea-table on which we were leaning our elbows. Finally, Louis, who was a poet, felt a mournful inspiration rising in his heart, and wished to write it down. She lent him a pencil and some paper. He leaned on the marble of the chimney-piece and wrote a few plaintive stanzas, filled with tears, like the funereal strophes of Gilbert. He resembled Gilbert, and he might have written those lines of his which will live as long as the lamentations of Job in the language of men :

“A luckless guest, myself at life’s rich feast I show
One day, alas ! but soon to die ;
And on the tomb I reach, with lingering step and slow,
No tear will fall from pitying eye ! ” etc.

Louis’s verses affected me. I took the pencil from his hands, and withdrawing a moment into my own chamber I wrote, in my turn, these lines which shall die with me, unknown to all ; the first verses that had sprung from my heart, and not from my imagination. I read them without daring to lift my eyes to her to whom they were addressed. Here they are,—but no, I will efface them, all my genius was in my love, and it has departed with it.

As I finished the reading of these verses, I saw on Julie’s face, on which the light of the lamp fell, an expression of surprise so tender, and of beauty so supernatural, that I stood quite as uncertain as my verses had

described between the angel and the woman, between love and adoration. This latter feeling predominated at last in my soul and in that of my friend. We fell on our knees before her sofa, we kissed the end of the black shawl which covered her feet. Those verses seemed to her merely the instantaneous and solitary expression of the feeling which I had for her. She praised them, but she did not speak to me of them again. She loved better our familiar discourse, and even our pensive silence, the one near the other, than these sallies of the mind which profane the soul rather than express it. Louis left us a few days later.

XXXIII

As a result of these first verses of mine, a feeble strophe of the perpetual hymn of my heart, she requested me to compose an ode for her which she would address as a tribute of admiration and as a specimen of my talents to one of the men of her Parisian society for whom she felt the greatest respect and attachment. This was Monsieur de Bonald. I knew nothing of him but his name and the reputation so justly earned of legislator, philosopher, and Christian, which rendered that name illustrious. I fancied that I was to address a modern Moses who had drawn from the rays of another Sinai the divine light

which he shed upon human laws. I wrote this ode in a night. I read it, the next morning, under a chestnut-tree on the mountain to her who had inspired me. She made me read it three times in succession. In the evening she copied it, in her light and firm handwriting. Her writing slid over the white surface of the paper like the shadow of the wings of her thought with the swiftness, elegance, and freedom of a bird in full flight. The next day, she sent it to Paris. Monsieur de Bonald replied by many obliging auguries respecting my talents. This was the beginning of my acquaintance with this excellent man, whose character I have always admired and loved since, without sharing his theocratical doctrines. My agreement with his presentations was at that time only a concession to my love. It would have been, at a later period, an act of homage paid to his virtue. But Monsieur de Bonald was, like Monsieur de Maistre, one of those prophets of the past, one of those men aged in their ideas, whom we salute with veneration. Seated on the threshold of futurity, they do not wish to enter it, but turn back a moment to listen to the beautiful lament for those things which perish in the human mind.

XXXIV

It was no longer even autumn ; it was a soft winter, lighted and warmed at intervals by the sunshine escaping through the clouds. We tried to deceive ourselves, and we said to each other that it was still autumn. We had such a fear of recognizing the winter which was coming to separate us. The snow fell often in the morning in light white flakes on the Bengal roses and immortelles in the garden, like the white down of swans who had moulted at night in the air which we saw them traversing. At noon, the sun melted this snow, and we often had delightful hours on the lake. The movement and the evaporation of the water seemed to warm, in reflecting them, these last rays of the sun. The fig-trees which hung from the rocks over the water, in the sheltered coves exposed to the south, had kept many of their wide leaves. The reflection of the sun against these rocks gave them still the colors, the splendors, and the warmth of summer evenings. But these hours glided as swiftly by as the stroke of the oars which propelled us at noontime past these luminous shores. The glancing light of the sun on the fir-trees, the green mosses, the winter-birds, more fully feathered, more active and more familiar than those of the spring-time ; the abundance and the winding foam of the thousand cascades extending

themselves over the slopes of the meadows and encountering each other in the ravines from which they fell purling and with noisy splashing from the tops of the dark and shining rocks into the lake ; the measured sound of the oars, the plaintive murmur of the wake following the helm which seemed to give forth, like a friendly voice from under the water, mysterious sighs for us in accompanying us with its regrets ; finally, the supernatural peacefulness which we experienced in this warm and luminous atmosphere, so near to each other, separated from the world by this abyss of waters,—all this filled us still at moments with such a feeling of the pure delight of existence, with such a fulness of internal joy, with such an overflowing of peace in love, that we could have defied Heaven itself to add anything. But with this happiness was mixed the consciousness that it was about to finish ; each stroke of the oar resounded in our hearts like a step in advance of the day that approached to separate us. Who knows whether by to-morrow these trembling leaves will not have fallen in the lake, if these mosses whereon we may still seat ourselves will not be covered with a thick couch of snow, if these splendid shores, this blue sky, these shining waves, will not be enshrouded by the mists of the coming night in an ocean of pale and dim hoarfrost ?

A long sigh would escape from us at thoughts like these, we each revolved them in our minds at the same

time, without daring to communicate them to each other for fear of arousing misfortune by naming it. Oh! who has not had thus in his life these happinesses without security and without future, in which life concentrates itself in an hour which we would wish to render eternal, and which we feel escaping from us minute by minute, in listening to the stroke of the pendulum which ticks off the seconds, in watching the hand which swallows up the hour on the clock-face, in feeling the carriage-wheel of which each revolution shortens the distance, or in hearing the splashing of the prow which leaves the waves behind it and brings you nearer and nearer to the shore on which you will have to descend from the heaven of your dreams on the hard and cold strand of reality!

XXXV

One afternoon when we were thus delightfully rocking in our boat, in the sun, in a calm and sheltered cove between two arms of the Mont du Chat, to the distant sound of a little cascade which sounded like a perpetual chant in the grottoes through which it filters before losing itself in the abyss of waters, our boatmen wished to land to draw some nets they had set there the day before. We remained alone in the boat, which was insecurely

fastened by a cord to the branch of a fig-tree, the motion of the boat caused the branch to bend and break without our being aware of it, and we thus drifted out into the middle of the bay, three hundred feet distant from the perpendicular rocks by which it is surrounded. The waters of the lake had, in this part, that bronzed color, those reflections as of melted metal, and that heavy immobility which the reflected shadows of high cliffs, the neighborhood of perpendicular rocks give, and which indicate the unfathomable depth of the waves in a bed which no one dare sound. I could have taken the oars and brought us back to the shore ; but this isolation from all living nature gave us a delightful thrill. We would have wished to lose ourselves thus, not on a sea which had shores, but in a firmament which had none. We no longer heard the voices of the boatmen, who had ascended, till they were lost to sight behind some rocks, the Savoy shore ; we heard only the distant and interrupted tinkling of the waterfall, some sullen breezes which from time to time traversed the motionless air, bearing with them the harmonious sighs of the pines, and the little, dull plashes of the waves against the sides of the boat to which our respiration communicated its only motion.

Our boat lay half in the sun and half in the shadow of the mountain, the prow in the light, the stern in the obscurity. I was seated at the feet of Julie, in the bottom of the boat, as on the first day on which I had brought

her back from Haute-Combe. We took delight in recalling by the aid of memory all the circumstances of that first day, that mysterious and intimate era in which the world commenced for us, because that day was the date of our meeting and of our love. She was reclining on the seat, one arm hanging over the edge of the boat, over the water, the other leaning on my shoulder, her hand playing with one of the curls of my long hair ; my head was thrown somewhat backward so that I could see only above the horizon the firmament and her face relieved against the lower part of the sky. Her visage was inclined over mine as if to contemplate her sun on my brow, her light in my eyes. An expression of happiness, calm, profound, ineffable, diffused itself over all her features and gave to her face a splendor and a transparency of the soul worthy of that heavenly frame of the sky in which I was looking at her adoringly. Suddenly I saw her turn pale, withdraw her two arms, one from my shoulder and the other from the side of the boat, start up in a sitting position, carry her two hands to her eyes, and conceal for a moment her face in them ; reflect in silence, then withdraw her hands wet with tears, and exclaim in a tone of serene and calm resolution : “Oh ! let us die ! ——”

After these words, she remained silent for an instant, then resumed : “Oh ! yes, let us die, for earth has nothing more to give us, Heaven nothing more to promise us !” She looked around her a long time, at

the sky, the mountains, the lake, the transparent and semi-luminous waves in the shadow of the boat. "Seest thou," she said (it was the first time, as it was the last, in which she made use, in addressing me, of that form of speech, solemn or familiar according as we address God or man), "seest thou how everything is prepared around us for a divine vanishing-away of our two lives? Look how that sun of the most beautiful of our years sinks, perhaps not to rise to-morrow; see how those mountains mirror themselves in the lake for the last time, extending their long shadow to us as if to say to us: 'Wrap yourselves in this shroud which I extend to you!' behold these waves, pure, limpid, profound, silent, which prepare for us a bed of sand where none will come to awake us to say to us: 'Depart.' No human eye sees us. No one will know through what mysterious cause the empty boat will be found to-morrow drifted against some rock of the shore. No ripple on these waters will betray to the curious or the indifferent the place where two bodies will have slidden in one embrace under the waves, or where two souls shall have mounted reunited into the eternal ether. No sound will remain of us on earth excepting only the sound of the ripple of the wave closing over us!—Oh! let us die in this intoxication of the soul and of nature, which will enable us to experience of death nothing but its voluptuousness! Later, we shall wish to die, and we shall die perhaps less happy! I am some years older than thou; this difference, unfelt to-day,

will increase with time. The little beauty which has attracted thee in my face will early fade. There will remain in thy eyes only the remembrance and the surprise at thy vanished enthusiasm. Besides, I can be but as a spirit to thee,— thou wilt feel the need of another happiness.— I should die of jealousy if thou shouldst find it with another woman.— I should die of sorrow if I saw thee unhappy because of me!— Oh! let us die, let us die, let us efface that doubtful or sinister future in this last sigh which will have at least on our lips only the unalloyed taste of complete felicity!—”

My soul said to me at the same moment, and as forcibly as her lips did to my ear that which her visage said to my eyes, that which nature solemn, mute, funereal in the splendor of her supreme hour, said to all my senses. The two voices that I heard, the one without, the other within, spoke to me the same words, as if one of these languages had been only the echo or the translation of the other. I forgot the universe, and I replied to her: “Let us die!”

* * * * *

I wound eight times around her body and my own, closely united as in a winding-sheet, the cords of the fishers’ net which were ready to my hand in the boat. I lifted her in my arms, which I had left free to precipitate her with me into the lake.— At the very moment when I was taking the spring which would have forever

buried us in the waters, I felt her head fall like the weight of a dead thing on my shoulder and her knees give way under her body. The excess of emotion, the happiness of dying together, had forestalled even death. She had fainted in my arms. The idea of taking advantage of her unconsciousness to hurry her, unknown to herself, and, perhaps, against her will, into my own grave, struck me with a sudden horror. I fell back with my burden into the bottom of the boat. I hastened to unloose the cords which bound us together. I laid her on the seat; I dipped my hands in the cool water of the lake and sprinkled for a long time her temples and her lips. I do not know how long she remained thus without feeling, without color, and without voice. When I finally saw her open her eyes and return to life, night had fallen and the slow drift of the boat had carried us into the middle of the lake!

“God has not permitted it,” I said to her; “we are still living; that which seemed to us the right of our love, was it not a double crime? Is there no one to whom we belong on the earth?— or no one in heaven?” added I, in respectfully calling her attention with eye and gesture to the firmament, as if I had just seen the Judge and the Master of destinies. “Do not speak of it more,” she said, rapidly, and in a low voice, “do not speak of it ever! You have desired that I should live, I will live; my crime was not in dying, but in taking you with me!” There seemed to be a

certain bitterness and, as it were, a tender reproach in her accent and in her look. "Has Heaven itself," I said to her, replying to her thoughts, "such hours as those which we have passed together? Life has; that is enough to make me in love with it." She regained promptly this time her color and her serenity. I seized the oars; I rowed the boat slowly toward the little sandy beach. I heard the voices of the boatmen, who had lit a fire under a projecting rock. We recrossed the lake dreamily, and re-entered the house in silence.

XXXVI

In the evening, when I went into her room, I found her seated and in tears before her table; several open letters were lying among the tea-things. "We should have done better to have died at once, for see the lingering death of separation which is about to begin for me," said she, pointing to some letters which bore the postmark of Geneva and of Paris.

Her husband wrote her that he began to be very anxious at her long absence, at a season of the year which might become more rigorous from day to day; that he felt himself gradually declining, and that he wished to embrace her and bless her before he died. His mournful entreaties were intermingled with many

expressions of a tenderness altogether paternal, and with some playful allusions to the handsome young brother who caused her to forget too much her other friendships. The other letter was from the Geneva physician who was to have come to take her back to Paris. He wrote her that he was obliged to depart unexpectedly to attend a German prince who required his services, and that he sent her in his place a respectable and trustworthy man who would accompany her to Paris and serve her as *valet de chambre* and courier on the road. This man had arrived. The departure was fixed for the day after the morrow.

This news, although constantly expected, struck us as if it had never been foreseen. We passed a long evening, and almost half the night, in silence, with dry eyes, leaning our elbows opposite each other on the little table, venturing neither to look at each other nor to speak for fear of melting into tears, and interrupting this long and silent agony of our minds only by a few disconnected and distraught words spoken in low and hollow tones which sounded in the stillness of the chamber like tears falling on a coffin. I had instantly determined to depart also.

XXXVII

The next day was the eve of our separation. The morning, as if to mock us, rose warmer and more splendid than it had been during the fairest forenoons of October.

While the trunks were being packed and the carriage prepared, we set off with the mules and the guides. We visited both the valley and the mountain to take our farewells and to see once more the stations of our love, like those of the cross, at all the sites where we had first seen each other, then met, visited together, seated ourselves, conversed, loved, during that long and divine communion between solitary nature and ourselves. We began with Tresserves,—charming hill! It lifts itself like a long green dune between the valley of Aix and the lakes. Its sides, rising perpendicularly from the water, are covered with chestnut-trees that rival those of Sicily. Their branches, extending over the waters, reveal glimpses of the sky or of portions of the blue lake, as one looks upward or downward. It was on the velvet of the moss-covered roots of these noble trees, which have seen successive generations of young men and young women pass like ants, that we had dreamed the most in our hours of contemplation. From it we descended by a steep declivity to a solitary little château known as Bon-Port. This little castle is so much hidden, from the

landward side, under the chestnuts of Tresserves, and from the lake, in the deep recesses of a sheltered little cove, that it is difficult to see it whether in walking over the hill or in navigating the little sea of Bourget. A terrace with a few fig-trees separates the château from the fine sandy beach on which the little blue tongues of the waves ceaselessly come to foam, to lap, to murmur, and to die. Oh! how we envied the happy possessor of this retreat, unknown to men, hidden between the boughs and the water, and known only to the birds of the lake, to the south wind and to the sun. We blessed it a thousand times in its repose, and we wished it hearts like ours to shelter!

XXXVIII

From Bon-Port we mounted again in turning the extremity of the hill of Tresserves, to the north, toward the high mountains which overlook the valley from Chambéry to Geneva. We saw again the plateaus, the pasturages, the thatched cottages hidden beneath the walnut trees, and the grassy slopes on which the young heifers lowed. Their bells sounded constantly as they wandered through the pasture, to give notice to the shepherd who watched them from a distance. We mounted even to the highest chalets. The icy wind of winter had already

destroyed the tips of the grass blades. We recalled to ourselves the delightful hours that we had passed there, the words we had said, the illusions of entire separation from the world that we had there entertained, the sighs we had confided to the mountain winds and rays to bear them to Heaven. We recalled all those hours of happiness and of peace now flown, all those words, all those reveries, all those gestures, all those looks, all those aspirations, as one removes from a dwelling all that is most precious in it when leaving. We buried, mentally, all these treasures, all these souvenirs, all these hopes, in the wooden walls of these chalets closed till spring, as in a depository of our souls, to find them intact on our return, if we should ever return !

XXXIX

We redescended, by the large wooded uplands, down to the foaming bed of a cascade. A small funereal monument to the memory of a beautiful young woman, Madame de Broc, had been set up there ; she had fallen therein several years before, and the whirlpool had carried her into the bottom of a grotto from which the foaming waters brought back, a long time afterward, her white dress and thus caused her body to be recovered. Lovers often come to seat themselves before this watery

tomb. Their hearts contract, their arms approach, as they think how a single false step on the slippery rock may destroy their fragile felicity !

From this cascade, which bears the name of Madame de Broc, we walked in silence toward the lake. It is overlooked in all its extent from the foot of the château of Saint-Innocent. There we dismounted from our mules under a high grove of scattered oaks interspersed with heather, solitary at that time. Since then, a rich planter, returned from India, has built himself a handsome country-house and planted a garden in these, his paternal, acres. We left our mules to graze unbridled in the forest, under the care of the children who acted as our guides. We walked on alone from tree to tree and from glade to glade until we came to the extremity of the narrow neck of land from which we could perceive the gleam of the lake and hear the splashing of its waters. This old wood of Saint-Innocent is a cape which advances far out in the waters at the most melancholy and most lonely part of their shores. It terminates in some gray granite rocks, washed by the foam when the wind lifts it, dry and shining when the waters have fallen. We seated ourselves each on one of two stones near each other. Before us, the abbey of Haute-Combe rose like a dark pyramid on the other shore of the lake. We looked at a little white spot which shone in the sun at the foot of the sombre heights of the monastery. It was the house of the fisherman where these waves had

thrown us together to unite us forever by the chance of our encounter; there was the chamber in which had been passed that night, at once funereal and divine, which had decided our two lives! "It is there!" she said to me, extending her arm toward the lake and pointing with her finger to the luminous point scarcely visible in the distance and in the shadow of the opposite bank. "Will there come a place and a day," added she, sorrowfully, "in which the memory of what we felt there, in those deathless hours, will appear to you as no more, in the perspective of your future, than that little spot on the shadowy background of that shore?"

To these words I could not reply, so much did this accent, this doubt, this prospect of death, of inconstancy, of frailness, of the possibility of forgetfulness, bruise my heart and fill my soul with presentiments. I burst into tears. I hid them between my fingers, turning my face toward the evening wind that it might dry them unperceived, but she saw them.

"Raphael," she resumed, more tenderly, "no, you will never forget me. I know it. I feel it, but love is short and life is long. You will live for long years after me. You will drain all that is sweet, or strong, or bitter, in the cup that nature offers to the lips of man. You will be a man! I feel it by your sensibility, at once manly and feminine. You will be a man, in all the misery and in all the grandeur of that name of man, by which God calls one of his strangest creatures! You

have, in one only of your aspirations, the breath for a thousand lives! You will live, with all the energy and in the full meaning of the word—life! I——”

She stopped for a moment, lifting her eyes and her arms toward Heaven and bowing her head as if in thankfulness. “I, I have lived!—— I have lived enough,” she resumed, in a contented tone, “since I have inhaled, to bear it forever with me, the spirit of the only soul that I waited for on earth, and which would vivify me even in that death from which you recalled me.— I shall die young, and I shall die without regret now, for I have drained at a single draught that life which you will not exhaust before your handsome brown hair will have become as white as that foam which wets your feet!

“This sky, this shore, this lake, these mountains, have been the scene of my only true life here below. Swear to me to blend so completely in your memory this heaven, this shore, this lake, these mountains, with my image, that the image of this sacred place shall in future be inseparable from my own, that this nature in your eyes, and I in your heart, shall be but one!—— so that,” she added, “when, after many days, you come back to see again this soft and magnificent nature, to wander under these trees, to seat yourself on the edge of these waves, to listen to these winds and these murmurs, you may see me and hear me, as living, as present, and as loving, as now!——”

She could not finish ; she melted also into tears. Oh ! how we wept ! and how long we wept ! the sound of our sobs, stifled in our hands, mingled with the sobbing of the waves on the sand. Our tears formed little creases in the mirror of the sleeping water at our feet. After twenty years, I cannot write it down without sobbing again.

Oh, men ! fear not for your affections, and feel no dread lest time should efface them. There is neither *to-day* nor *yesterday* in the powerful echoes of memory, there is only *forever*. He who feels no longer, has never felt ! There are two memories : the memory of the senses, which wears out with the senses and lets perishable things decay ; and the memory of the soul, for which time does not exist, and which lives over at the same instant every moment of its past and present existence,—a faculty of the soul which has, like the soul itself, ubiquity, universality, and immortality of the spirit ! Reassure yourselves, you who love ; Time has dominion over hours, none over souls.

XL

I strove to speak. I no longer could. My sobs spoke, my tears promised. We rose to rejoin the muleteers. We returned by the light of the setting sun through

the long valley of poplars, now leafless, where she had so long held my hand during our first passage with the palanquin. In passing through the long suburb of thatched cottages which lies outside the gates of the town, and through the Place and the steep street of Aix, we were saluted from the windows and the doorways by sad faces, like kind souls watching the departure of two belated swallows who are the last to leave the battlements of the city walls. The poor women rose from the stone benches where they were spinning before their houses, the children left their goats and donkeys which they were bringing home from the meadows, and all came to address, some only a look, some a word, some a silent inclination, to the young lady and to him whom all thought her brother. She was so beautiful, so gracious, so much loved ! it was as if the last ray of the year were retiring from the valley.

When we had reached the top of the town, we descended from our mules. We dismissed the children. Not wishing to lose an hour of this last day that had not yet expired on the rosy snows of the Alps, we ascended slowly and alone a hollow road which leads to a terraced garden of a pretty house known as the *Maison Chevalier*. From this terrace, which seems like a platform erected in the centre of a panorama, the eye embraces the town, the lake, the gorges of the Rhône, the plateaus rising in stages, the hills and the summits of this Alpine landscape. We were seated on the trunk of a fallen tree,

leaning on the parapet wall of the terrace, silent and motionless, looking by turns, or all at once, at all the different localities that we had filled during the last six weeks with our looks, with our steps, with our communings, with our twofold dreams and our sighs. When all these had disappeared, one by one, in the twilight and the shadows ; when there remained only a gleam of light in the western sky,—we both rose up suddenly, as if by one instinct, and we fled, still looking behind us, but in vain, as if an invisible hand had chased us from this Eden while cruelly effacing in our steps all this beautiful scene of our happiness and our love.

XLI

We returned home. The evening was sad. However, I was to accompany Julie on the box of her carriage, as far as Lyons. When the hand of her little travelling clock marked midnight, I retired, that she might be able to take some repose before the morning. She accompanied me toward the door. I opened it ; “Good-by, till to-morrow,” I said, kissing the hand which she extended to me in the corridor. She made no reply, but I heard her murmur between her sobs behind the door which I had closed : “There is no more morrow for us !”

There were, a few more, but they were brief and bitter, like the last dregs of a drained cup. We started for Chambéry before sunrise, not to show in broad daylight our cheeks pale with sleeplessness and our eyes red with weeping. We passed the day there in a small inn in the Italian suburb. This inn, of which the wooden galleries overlooked a garden traversed by a little stream, gave us a few more hours of pleasant illusion by recalling to us the galleries, the silence, and the solitude of our dwelling at Aix.

XLII

We wished, before we left Chambéry and its dear valley, to visit together the humble dwelling of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and of Madame de Warens, at Les Charmettes. A landscape is but a man or a woman. What is Vaucluse without Petrarch? what is Sorrento without Tasso? Sicily without Theocritus? the Paraclet without Héloïse? Annecy without Madame de Warens? Chambéry without Jean-Jacques Rousseau? A sky without rays, a voice without echo, localities without souls. Man animates not only man, he animates all nature. He carries an immortality with him into Heaven, he leaves another in the localities that he has consecrated. In searching his trace we find it, and we truly converse with him !

We took with us the volume of the *Confessions* in which the poet of Les Charmettes describes this rustic retreat. Rousseau was cast there by the first shipwreck of his fate, and received by a woman, young, lovely, and adventurous, wrecked like himself. This woman seemed to have been composed expressly by nature, of virtues and weaknesses, sensibility and license, piety and independence of thought, to cherish and develop the adolescence of this strange genius whose soul contained at once a sage, a lover, a philosopher, a legislator, and a madman. Another woman might perhaps have caused another life to develop. We can always find completely in a man the first woman whom he has loved. Happy would he have been who had encountered Madame de Warens before her profanation! She was an adorable idol,—but the idol had been sullied. She herself debased the worship which a young and loving soul rendered her. The amours of this young man and of this woman are a page from *Daphnis and Chloe*, torn from the book and found spotted and soiled in the bed of a courtesan.

It matters not; it was the first love, or the first delirium, of this fine young man. The locality where this love was born, the arbor in which Rousseau made his first avowal, the chamber in which he blushed at his first emotions, the court where the disciple glorified in descending to the most humble bodily offices to serve his beloved protectress, the scattered chestnut-trees in whose

shade they sat together to discourse of God and to interrupt with foolish laughter and childish caresses their sportive theology, their two figures so well framed in all this landscape, so well adapted to this nature, enclosed, wild, mysterious, like themselves,—all this has for the poets, the philosophers, and the lovers, an attraction hidden yet profound. They yield to it without knowing why. For the poets, it is the first page of that soul which was a poem ; for the philosophers, it is the cradle of a revolution ; for the lovers, it is the birthplace of a first love.

XLIII

We mounted, discoursing of this love, the rocky footpath at the bottom of the ravine which leads to Les Charmettes. We were alone. The very goatherds had forsaken the dried-up pastures and the leafless hedges. The sun shone out at intervals between the rapidly passing clouds. His rays, more concentrated, were warmer within the sheltered sides of the ravine. The redbreasts hopped about in the bushes almost within reach of our hands. We arrested our steps from time to time and sat down on the sunny side of the path to read a page or two of the *Confessions* and identify ourselves with the locality.

We saw again the young vagrant, almost in rags, knocking at the door of Annecy and delivering with a blush his letter of recommendation to the fair recluse, in

the lonely path that leads from her house to the church. The young man and the young recluse were so present to us that it seemed as if they were expecting us and that we were about to see them at the window or in the alleys of the garden of Les Charmettes. Then we would walk on, only to stop again. The spot attracted and repelled us at once, like a place in which love had been revealed, and like a place in which it also had been profaned. It presented no such peril to us. We were to carry ours away with us as pure and as divine as we had brought it there with us in our two souls.

“Oh!” I inwardly exclaimed, “were I a Rousseau, what might not this other Madame de Warens have made of me; she who is as superior to her of Les Charmettes as I myself am inferior to Rousseau, not in feeling, but in genius!”

Absorbed in these thoughts, we climbed up a rapidly sloping lawn planted here and there with some old walnut-trees. These trees had seen the two lovers amusing themselves beneath their shade. To the right, at the spot where the way narrows, as if to close entirely the passage to the traveller, a terrace of rough stones, unevenly joined, supports the dwelling of Madame de Warens. It is a small cube of gray stones, pierced by a door and two windows on the side of the terrace, and the same on the garden side; three low rooms in the upper story, and a grand salon on the ground-floor, without other furniture than a portrait of Madame de

Warens in her youth. Her graceful figure seems to radiate from the dusty canvas, darkened by smoke, with beauty, sportiveness, and pensive grace. Poor charming woman! If she had not encountered that wandering youth on the high-road, if she had not opened to him her house and her heart, this sensitive and suffering genius might have been extinguished in the mire. This meeting seemed like an effect of chance, but it was the predestination of this great man, under the figure of a first love. This woman saved him. She cultivated him. She exalted him in solitude, in liberty, and in love, like those houris of the Orient who prepare the young devotees for their martyrdom by voluptuous pleasures. She gave to him his pensive imagination, his feminine soul, his tender accent, his passion for nature. In communicating to him her own dreamy soul, she gave him the enthusiasm of women, of youth, of lovers, of the poor, the oppressed, the unhappy of his century. She gave him the world, and he was ungrateful!— she gave him glory, and he left to her opprobrium!— But posterity should be grateful for them, and forgive a weakness that has procured us the prophet of liberty. When Rousseau wrote those odious pages concerning his benefactress, he was no longer Rousseau, he was a poor madman. Who knows if his morbid and troubled imagination, which caused him to see insult in every benefit, hatred in friendship, did not also lead him to see only the courtesan in the sensitive woman and cynicism

in love? I have always had this suspicion. I defy any reasonable man to recompose, with a semblance of probability, the character which Rousseau gives to the woman he loved, with the contradictory elements which he has brought together in this womanly nature. One of these elements would exclude the other. If she had soul enough to adore Rousseau, she would not have loved at the same time Claude Anet. If she wept over Claude Anet and Rousseau, she would not have loved the young hair-dresser. If she were pious, she would not have gloried in her weakness, she would have deplored it. If she were engaging, handsome, and frail, as Rousseau paints her, she would not have been reduced to seek her adorers among the vagabonds on the high-road and in the streets. If she affected devotion while leading such a life, she was a calculating woman and a hypocrite. If she were a hypocrite, she could not have been the frank, open, and unreserved creature of the *Confessions*. This portrait is not true. It is a fictitious head and a fictitious heart. There is a hidden mystery somewhere here: perhaps it is in the misguided hand of the artist rather than in the nature of the woman whose features he wished to reproduce. We must neither accuse the painter, whose judgment is impaired, nor believe in the portrait which, after suggesting an adorable figure, disfigures it.

For my part, I have never believed that Madame de Warens would have recognized herself in the doubtful

pages of Rousseau's old age. In my imagination I have always restored her as she appeared at Annecy to the young poet, lovely, sensitive, tender, light of conduct though really pious, prodigal of kindness, thirsting after love, and burning with the desire of combining the two names of mother and of mistress in her attachment for this youth whom Providence had thrown to her and whom her need of loving had caused her to adopt. This is the true portrait, as the old men of Chambéry and of Annecy have given it to me after hearing it a thousand times described by their fathers. The soul of Rousseau himself bears witness against his own accusations. Whence would he have derived that sublime and tender pity, that feminine melancholy of the heart, those fine and delicate touches of feeling, if a woman had not given them to him with her heart? No: the woman who called into existence such a man was not a cynical courtesan, it was a fallen Héloïse. But it was an Héloïse fallen through love, and not through turpitude or depravity. I appeal to Rousseau young and a lover from Rousseau old and morose and calumniating human nature; and that which I go often to Les Charmettes to seek in reverie is Madame de Warens, more touching and more seductive in my eyes and in my heart than in his.

XLIV

A poor woman made us some fire in the chamber of Madame de Warens. Accustomed to the visits of strangers and to their long and meditative conversations in this theatre of the first years of a celebrated man, this gardener continued her occupations in the kitchen and in the court without paying any attention to us. She left us to warm ourselves in peace, and to wander freely from the salon to the garden, and from the garden into the chambers. The garden, flooded with sunlight and surrounded by a little wall which separated it from the vines, but denuded of grass and of vegetables, and overrun with creeping plants, mallows and nettles, resembled one of those village cemeteries where the peasants come on Sundays to warm themselves in the winter sun against the wall of the church, their feet on the tombs of the dead. The pathways, formerly sanded but now filled with damp earth and yellow mosses, showed only too well the neglect which had followed the absence of the hosts. Oh! how we would have wished to discover there the imprint of Madame de Warens's foot when she used to go from tree to tree or from vine to vine, basket in hand, gathering the pears of the orchard or the grapes of the vine, frolicking with the pupil or the confessor. But there remains no longer any trace of them

in their dwelling but themselves. Their name, their memory, their image, the sun which they saw, the air which they respired and which seems still to be radiant with their youth, warm from their breathing, filled with their voices, envelop you with the same light, the same respirations, the same dreams, and the same sounds with which they enchanted their spring-time !

I saw by the pensive countenance and by the silence of Julie that the impression of this sanctuary of love and genius moved her no less profoundly than it did myself. She even left me at moments, to occupy herself more closely with her thoughts, as if she would have feared to communicate them all to me ; returning to the house to warm herself while I was still in the garden ; returning to the garden and seating herself on the stone bench of the arbor when I came to rejoin her before the fire. Finally, I went to seek her in the arbor ; the last yellow leaves of the trellis hung ready to detach themselves from their stems and permitted the sunshine to envelop her, and, as it were, clothe her with its rays. "What is it you wish to think of without me?" I said to her, with an accent of tender reproach. "Do I ever think alone?" "Alas!" she answered, "you will not believe me ; but I was thinking that I could wish to be Madame de Warens for you, during a single season, even though I were to see the remainder of my days passed in abandonment and my memory covered with shame, like her ! even though you proved as ungrateful and as calumniating as Rousseau !

“How happy is she!” she pursued, losing her regard in the depth of the sky as if she had been seeking, and had actually seen, the image of the strange creature she envied;—“how happy she is! she has been able to sacrifice herself for him she loved!”

“Oh! what ingratitude, and what profanation of yourself and of our happiness!” I replied, leading her back slowly to the house over the dead leaves which rustled under our feet. “Have I then ever, by one word, one look, one sigh, shown you that there was aught lacking in my bitter but complete felicity? Can you not conceive, in your angelic imagination for another Rousseau (if nature could have produced two), another Madame de Warens? a Madame de Warens, young, virginal, pure, angel, lover, and sister, all at once, giving her entire soul, her inviolable and immortal soul, instead of her perishable charms? giving it to a brother lost and found again, young, misguided, wandering too, like the clockmaker’s son, in this world? opening to this brother, in place of her house and her garden, the luminous sanctuary of her tendernesses? purifying him in her rays? washing him clean from his first stains in the water of her tears? filling him with horror forever for all other enjoyment than that of inward possession and of contemplation? teaching him to find satisfaction even in his privations, a thousand times above all those sensual gratifications that the brute shares with man? indicating to him his course in life, by the light of the regards with

which she protects him? exciting him to glory and to virtue, and recompensing him for the sacrifice by this thought,—that glory, virtue, sacrifices, all are taken into account in the heart of his beloved, all accumulated in her love, all multiplied in her gratitude, and all added to that treasure of tenderness which fills itself here below and is only opened in heaven?——”

As I spoke thus, I fell, nevertheless, overcome, my face hidden in my hands, on a chair some distance from hers, against the wall. I remained there a long time without speaking. “Let us go,” she said to me, “I am cold; this place is not good for us!” We gave some pieces of money to the woman, and we took our way slowly back to Chambéry.

XLV

The next day, Julie was to start for Lyons. In the evening, Louis came to see us at the inn. I induced him to go and spend some weeks with me in my father's house. This was situated on the road from Lyons to Paris. We went out together, to seek among the coach-makers of Chambéry a light calèche, uncovered, in which we could follow, posting, my friend's carriage as far as the city, where we would be obliged to separate. We soon found what we sought.

Before daylight, we were off, and we galloped in silence through the sinuous gorges of Savoy which at the bridge of Beauvoisin open into the stony and monotonous plains of Dauphiny. At every relay, we descended and went to the door of the first carriage to inquire of the health of the poor invalid. Alas! each turn of the wheels that carried her away from that source of life which she had found in Savoy, seemed to take away some of her color and to return to her eyes and her features something of that languor and that dull fever which had struck me as the beauty of death the first time that I had seen her. The approach of the final moment when we should be forced to leave her visibly caused her heart to contract. Between the Tour-du-Pin and Lyons, we got into her carriage for a few leagues, to try to cheer her. I entreated her to sing for my friend the ballad of the Scottish sailor. She did so, to please me, but at the second verse, which relates the parting between the two lovers, the similarity of our situation and the hopeless sorrow of the song in her voice so overcame her that she broke into tears before us. She threw over her face, as a veil, a black shawl which she was wearing that day. I saw her sob a long time under this shawl. At the last relay, she had a fainting fit, which lasted till we reached the door of the hotel where we were to stay at Lyons. We helped her maid to carry her to her bed. During the evening, she recovered, and we continued on the following day our journey toward Mâcon.

XLVI

It was there that we were to separate definitely. My friend and I gave our instructions to her courier. We hurried the adieus, for fear of increasing her illness by prolonging these painful emotions, as one opens a wound quickly to spare the sufferer. My friend set out for my father's country-place, where I was to follow him the next day.

However, Louis had scarcely departed when I felt myself incapable of keeping the promise I had given him. The thought of leaving Julie in tears to prosecute her long winter journey in the care of two servants, without knowing whether she might not fall ill in some isolated inn and perhaps die in calling me in vain to her aid, rendered it impossible for me to have any peace. I had no money left. The good old man who had lent me the twenty-five louis had died during my absence. I took my watch, a gold chain that had been given to me three years before by a friend of my mother, some jewels, my epaulets, my sabre, the silver lace of my uniform, I wrapped them all up in my cloak and I went to my mother's jeweler, who gave me thirty-five louis for the whole of my baggage. I hastened from there to the inn where Julie slept, and caused her courier to be summoned. I told him that I

Chapter XLVII

At last, a post-carriage issued rapidly from one of the neighboring streets and drew up under the windows of the house. I hastened toward it, and half concealed myself in the shadow of a column under a doorway by the side of that at which the carriage had stopped.





should follow the carriage at a distance, even to the gates of Paris, but I did not wish his mistress to know of it, for fear that she should object to it, out of consideration for me. I inquired the names of the towns and the hotels where he intended to stop on the road, in order that I might halt in the same towns but put up at other inns. I rewarded him in anticipation, and largely, for his discretion. At the post-house, I ordered horses, and by hastening was able to set out a half-hour after I had seen the departure of the carriage I wished to follow.

XLVII

No unforeseen obstacle arose to counteract the mysterious watchfulness which I wished to exercise, while remaining invisible, over the destiny which I followed. The courier gave notice secretly to the postilions of the approach of a second calèche, for which he ordered two horses, and I thus found, at each relay, my conveyance waiting for me. I accelerated or I slackened my pace according as I wished to keep at a distance or approach more nearly the first carriage. I interrogated the postilions on the health of the young lady they had just driven. From the heights of the hills I could see far down in the plain, speeding through the mist or the

sunshine, the carriage which held my happiness. My thoughts outstripped the horses, and I saw in fancy Julie in her carriage, wrapped in a slumber full of my image, or awake and weeping over the remembrance of our beautiful days that were flown. When I closed my eyes, in order to see her more clearly, I thought I could hear her respiration. I can scarcely comprehend, at this day, how I could have had sufficient control over myself to be able to resist, during a journey of a hundred and twenty leagues, the inward impulse that incessantly impelled me toward that carriage after which I hastened without wishing to overtake it, and in which all my soul was enclosed, while my body only, insensible to the snow and the icy wind, followed, shaken, jolted, and frosty, but without consciousness of its own sufferings. But the fear of causing Julie an unexpected shock which might prove fatal, of renewing a heart-rending scene of separation, the idea of watching thus over her safety like a loving Providence, nailed me to my resolution.

At the first stop, she descended at the chief hotel of Autun ; I, at a little inn in the suburb close by. Before daybreak, the two carriages, within sight of each other, were again traversing the long white and winding line which the road traces through the gray plains and Druidical oaks of upper Burgundy. We stopped in the little town of Avallon ; she, in the centre, I, at the extremity, of the town. The next day, we were rolling toward Sens. The snow, accumulated by the north winds

around the high and arid uplands of Lucy-le-Bois and of Vermanton, fell in large, half-liquid flakes on the mountains and on the road and muffled the noise of the wheels. One could hardly distinguish the misty horizon at the distance of a few feet before one through this powder of snow which the wind lifted in whirlwinds from the arable lands adjoining. It was no longer possible to determine, either by the ear or the eye, the distance between the two calèches. Suddenly I perceived before me, at the very heads of my horses, Julie's carriage stopped in the middle of the road. The courier had descended from his seat, and was standing at the foot-board, calling out and making signs of distress. I leaped out and flew to the carriage on the first impulse, which was stronger than my prudence; I leaped inside where the maid was striving to rouse her mistress from a fainting fit caused by the fatigue, the storm, and, perhaps, also by the tumult of her own heart. What I felt while sustaining thus in my arms that adored head during a long hour of insensibility, desiring and fearing at the same time that she might hear and that she might not recognize my voice which recalled her back to life; while the courier ran to obtain fire and hot water in the distant cottages, and the maid, holding on her knees the icy feet of her mistress, rubbed them with her hands and pressed them against her bosom to warm them;—no one can either conceive or tell, unless he, too, has thus felt death and life contend in his heart!

At last, these tender cares, the application of the hot water brought by the courier, that of my hands upon hers, of my breath on her forehead, recalled the heat to her extremities. The color which began to appear in her cheeks, and a long and feeble sigh which escaped from her lips, indicated to me her approaching return to consciousness. I sprang out from the carriage on the road, so that she might not see me when she reopened her eyes; I remained by the wheels, somewhat behind, my face concealed in my cloak. I directed the servants to keep silence concerning my presence. By signs they gave me to understand that she was reviving. I heard her voice stammer, in awakening, these words spoken as in a dream: "Oh! if Raphael were here! I thought it was Raphael!" I leaped into my calèche. The horses started; a long distance soon separated us. In the evening, I went to the inn at Sens, where she was staying, to inquire after her. The courier assured me that she had recovered and that she was peacefully sleeping.

I followed her track to Fossard, a relay station near the little town of Montereau. At this place, the road from Sens to Paris branches in two directions, the one passing by Fontainebleau, the other by Melun. This latter is shorter by several leagues; I took it in order to arrive in Paris a few moments before Julie, and to see her descend from her carriage at the door of her own dwelling. I doubled the pay of the postilions, and I arrived long before night at the hotel where I was

accustomed to put up in Paris. As night fell, I went to post myself on one of the quays, opposite Julie's house, which she had so often described to me ; I recognized it as if I had passed my life there. I could see in the interior, through the windows, that movement of shadowy forms coming and going which indicates the expected arrival of an unusual guest. I saw on the ceiling the reflection of a large fire burning in the fire-place. The figure of an old man approached the window several times, appearing to look out and to listen to the noises on the quay. It was her husband, her father. The concierges held the door open ; they came out from time to time on the pavement, as if to look and to listen also. A street-lamp, swung by the stormy wind of December, threw a flickering and alternating light on the pavement before the door. At last, a post-carriage issued rapidly from one of the neighboring streets and drew up under the windows of the house. I hastened toward it, and half concealed myself in the shadow of a column under a doorway by the side of that at which the carriage had stopped. I saw the servants rush to the door. I saw Julie alight in the arms of the old man, who embraced her as a father embraces his child after a long absence ; then he remounted the steps heavily, leaning on the arm of the concierge. The carriage was discharged. The postilion drove it off to the stable, in another street ; the door of the house closed. I returned to my post near the parapet on the river side.

XLVIII

I watched from there for a long time the lighted windows of Julie's house. I sought to discover what was going on within. I saw the usual stir of an arrival,—the bringing-in of trunks, the undoing of packages, the arranging of furniture. When all this movement had ceased, when the lights no longer hurried from one room to another, when the old man's chamber, on the first story, was lit only by the dim light of a night-lamp, I saw, through the window of the *entresol* beneath, the slender and drooping figure of Julie for a moment throw its shadow on the white curtains. She remained some time in that attitude ; then I saw her open the window, regardless of the cold, look for a moment toward the Seine in my direction, as if by a preternatural revelation of love her eyes were to reach me ; then turn and look long at a star in the north which we had been in the habit of contemplating together and which we had promised each other to observe when separated, as if to give our souls a rendezvous in the inaccessible solitude of the firmament. I felt this look, as if there had fallen on my heart a coal of fire. I understood that our souls were united in the same thought. My resolutions vanished. I darted forward to cross the quay, to get under her window and to call to her one word that

should make her recognize her brother there at her feet. But at the same moment she closed the window. The rolling of carriages drowned the sound of my voice. The light was extinguished in the *entresol*. I remained motionless in the middle of the quay. The clock of a neighboring edifice sounded midnight. I approached the door and I kissed it convulsively, without daring to knock. I knelt on the threshold, I prayed the stone to guard the supreme treasure which I had brought back to confide thus to these walls, and then slowly withdrew.

XLIX

The next morning, I departed from Paris, without having seen one of the friends I then had there; happy inwardly at not having had a single look, a single word, or a single step, which had not been for her. The rest of the world already no longer existed for me. Only, before departing, I threw in the post a little note for Julie, dated at Paris. She should receive it at her awakening. This note contained only these words: "I have followed you. I have watched, invisible, over you. I was not able to leave you without knowing that you had returned to the care of those who love you. Last

night, at midnight, when you opened the window and sighed in looking at the star, I was there ! You might have heard my voice. When you read these lines, I shall be far away !——”

L

I travelled day and night in such a bewilderment of thought, that I was conscious neither of the cold, the hunger, nor the distance, and I arrived at M—— as if awakening from a dream, and hardly remembering that I had been at Paris. I found my friend Louis awaiting me at the little country-house of my father. His presence was soothing to me. I could at least speak to him of her whom he admired as much as I did. We slept in the same chamber. A portion of our nights was passed in converse on this divine apparition. He had been not less dazzled by it than myself. He considered her as one of those illusions of the imagination, as one of those women more than mortal, as the Beatrice of Dante, the Leonora of Tasso, the Laura of Petrarch, or Vittoria Colonna, the loving, the poet, the heroine, all in one ; figures which traverse the earth almost without touching it and without arresting their flight, only to fascinate the eyes of some men, the privileged few of love, in order to lead their souls on to immortal aspirations, and to be the *sursum corda*

of supreme imaginations. As to Louis, he did not venture to lift his love to the height of his enthusiasm. His tender heart, hurt and wounded at an early age, was then filled with the touching image of a poor and pious orphan of his family. His happiness would have been to have married her and to have lived in obscurity and peace in a little house on the hills of Chambéry. Want of fortune restricted the two poor lovers to a sad and tender friendship, from fear of injuring the family name by their poverty and of bequeathing misery to their children. The young girl died a few years later, of discouragement and of solitude. Hers was one of the sweetest figures that I have ever known to be extinguished for want of the warmth of fortune's rays. Her face, on which might have been seen the remains of a youthful blooming equally ready to flower again or to die, bore the most gracious and the most sublime expression of that virtue of unhappiness which is called resignation. She became blind, through weeping in secret through long years of waiting and of uncertainty. I met her once, on one of my returns from Italy. She was led by the hand, by one of her little sisters, in the streets of Chambéry. When she heard my voice, she turned pale and sought for some support with her poor blind hand. "Forgive me," she said, "it is because, when I heard that voice in former times, I used to hear with it another——" Poor girl! she hears in heaven to-day that of her lover.

LI

How long were the two months that I was obliged to pass far from her, in the country or in the town, at my father's house, before the time came that I could rejoin Julie at Paris! I had exhausted, during the last three or four months, the allowance I received from my father, the secret resources of my mother's indulgence, and the purse of my friends, to pay the debts that dissipation, play, and travelling had caused me to contract. I had no means of procuring the small sum necessary to enable me to go to Paris and live there, even in seclusion and penury. It was necessary that I should wait till the month of January, when one of the quarter's allowances from my father became due, and at that period also a rich but severe uncle and some kind but prudent old aunts were in the habit of making me some small presents. I hoped, by the aid of all these resources, to get together the sum of six or eight hundred francs, sufficient to keep me in Paris for a few months. This humbleness of resources would no longer be a trial to my vanity, for my life now consisted of nothing but my love. All the riches of the world would only suffice to purchase me that moment of the day which I hoped to pass by her side!

The days of waiting were filled with the one thought of her. We devoted to each other every hour of our

day. In the morning, at her awakening, she shut herself up to write to me. At the same moment, I was writing to her. Our pages and our thoughts crossed each other on the road, by every post, questioning each other, replying and mingling, without the interruption of a single day. There were thus really only a few hours of absence between us, those of the evening and the night. These, even, I managed to fill with her contemplation. I surrounded myself with her letters. I opened them on my table. I strewed them over my bed. I learned them by heart. I repeated over again to myself the most passionate and the most penetrating passages. I put into them her voice, her accent, her gesture, her look. I replied to her. I thus succeeded in producing in myself such an illusion of the reality of her presence that I was sad and impatient when I was interrupted for meals or for visits. It seemed to me that people came to drag me from her, or to drive her out of my room. In my long excursions on the mountains or in the meadows, misty and without horizon, which bordered the river, I carried with me her letter of the morning. More than once would I seat myself on the rocks, or on the edge of the stream, or on the ice, to re-read it. It seemed to me that each time I read it I discovered a word or an accent that had escaped me before. I remember that I always directed mechanically my excursions toward the north, as if each step that I took toward Paris brought me nearer to her and diminished by so

much the cruel distance that separated us. Sometimes I went very far on the road to Paris, with this idea. When it became necessary to return on my steps, I had to struggle a long time with myself. I was sad, I turned my face many times toward that part of the horizon where she breathed. I returned more heavy and more slowly. Oh! how I envied the wings of the crows, powdered with snow, which flew northward, through the mist. Oh! what a pang did the carriages passing on the road toward Paris give me! how many would I not have given of my days of useless youth to be in the place of those listless old men who looked from their carriage-windows with an abstracted eye at the solitary youth by the side of the road, whose steps travelled in the contrary direction to his heart! Oh! how interminably long seemed to me the short days of December and January. There was for me only one good hour in all the twenty-four,—that in which I heard from my chamber the steps, the rattle, and the voice of the postman who distributed the letters to the doors of the quarter. As soon as I heard him, I opened my window. I could see him coming up from the end of the street, his hands full of letters which he distributed to the servants, waiting before each house till he received the postage. How I cursed the slowness of these good women who counted their money into his hand as if they would never finish! Before he could ring at my father's door, I had flown down the stairway, traversed the vestibule, and was waiting for him on the threshold,

palpitating with impatience. While the old man handled his packet of letters, I sought to discover among them the envelope of fine Holland paper and the address in the handsome English handwriting which revealed my treasure among all those coarse papers and those clumsy superscriptions of commercial or ordinary letters. I seized it tremblingly; a cloud seemed to come before my eyes; my heart beat; my legs shook under me. I hid the letter under my coat, for fear of encountering some one on the stairs, and that such a frequent correspondence should appear suspicious to my mother. I flew into my chamber. I bolted my door, that I might devour at my leisure, and without interruption, these pages. How many tears, how many kisses, how many bites even, have I not bestowed upon the paper! alas, and when, years after, I have reopened this volume of letters, how many words effaced by my lips are needed to complete the sense of these phrases, washed away or torn by my tears or my transports!

LII

After breakfast, I would remount into my upper room to re-read again my letter and to reply to it. These were the most delicious and the most feverish hours of my day. I took four sheets of the largest and thinnest

Holland paper which Julie had sent me from Paris for this purpose, and of which each page, commenced at the extreme top, finishing at the extreme bottom, written on the margins and crossways, contained some thousands of words. I filled, every morning, all these sheets; I found them only too quickly filled and too small for the passionate and tumultuous overflowing of my thoughts. There was in these letters neither commencement nor ending, nor middle, nor grammar, nor anything of that which is generally understood by style. It was my soul laid bare before another soul, expressing, or, rather, stammering, as best it could by the aid of the insufficient language of men, the tumultuous sensations of which it was full: this language was not made to express the inexpressible; these empty words, imperfect signs, hollow phrases, language of ice, that the plenitude and the concentration and the fire of our souls melted like a refractory metal to form out of it I know not what language, vague, ethereal, flaming, caressing like the tongues of flames, which conveyed no sense to any one, and which we alone comprehended because it was us alone! Never did this effusion of my heart either arrest itself or grow cold. If the firmament had been but one page, and God had bidden me fill it with my love, this page would not have contained all that I felt in me to express! I only stopped when the four pages were entirely filled, and it always seemed to me that I had said nothing!—in fact, I had said nothing, for who can ever express the infinite?

LIII

These letters, to the composition of which I brought no pitiful pretensions of genius, and which were not a labor, but a delight, might, however, have marvellously served me later if God had destined me to speak to men, or to paint the shades, the languors, or the fury of the passion of the soul in works of the imagination. I may say that, unknown to myself, I struggled despairingly, and, like Jacob with the angel, against the poverty, the rigidity, and the resistance of the language which I was forced to employ, not knowing that of Heaven. The preternatural efforts which I made to vanquish, make flexible, extend, bend, spiritualize, color, inflame, or extinguish the expressions; the necessity of expressing by mere words the most intimate and the most elusive shades of sentiment, the most ethereal aspirations of thought, the most irresistible impulses and the most chaste reserves of passion, even to the regards, the attitudes, the sighs, the silences, the languors, the effacement of the heart in the adoration of the invisible object of love;—these efforts, I say, which broke my pen in my hands as a rebellious instrument, made it find sometimes, nevertheless, even in breaking, the word, the turn, the voice, the cry, which it searched in order to give speech to the impossible. I had not spoken any language, but

I had uttered the cry of my heart, and I had been heard. When I rose from my chair after this rude but delightful contest between the words, the pen, and the paper, I remember that notwithstanding the cold of my chamber in winter, icy sweat ran down my forehead. I opened the window, to cool myself and to dry my hair.

LIV

But these letters were not only cries of love ; they were, most often, invocations, contemplations, related dreams of the future, perspectives opening up into heaven : consolations and prayers.

This love, which by its nature was debarred from all those enjoyments which relax the heart by satisfying the senses, had reopened in me all those springs of piety which had been dried up or polluted by vile pleasures. This sentiment became elevated in my soul to the height and the purity of the divine love. I endeavored to lift with myself even up to heaven, on the wings of my exalted and almost mystic imagination, this second soul, suffering and arid. I spoke of God, the only Being sufficiently perfect to have created this superhuman perfection of beauty, of genius, and of tenderness ; the only Being grand enough to contain the immensity of our aspirations ; the only One infinite enough and inexhaustible enough to absorb

and whelm in His own breast the love which He had lighted within us, so that this flame, in consuming us one by the other, might make us exhale, one with the other, our sighs in Him! I consoled Julie in the sacrifices which duty forced us to make of a more complete happiness here below. I showed her the value of the merit of these sacrifices of a moment in the eyes of the Eternal Recompenser of our actions. I blessed the purity and the unselfishness of our thwarted sentiments, since they should one day obtain for us a more immaterial and more angelic happiness in the eternal atmosphere of pure spirits. I even went so far as to call myself happy, and to sing hymns of the resignation to which we were condemned by love itself, by an even greater love. I conjured Julie to think no more of my troubles, not to have any herself. I displayed to her a courage, a contempt for terrestrial happiness which often existed for me only in my words. I made to her a burnt offering of all that there was human in me. I elevated myself to the immateriality of the angels, so that she might not suspect a suffering or a regret in my adoration. I besought her to seek in a tender and sustaining religion, in the shelter of the Church, in the mysterious faith of that Christ, the God of tears, in kneeling and in invocation, the nearer hopes, the consolations, and the delights that I had tasted myself, in my childhood. She had renewed in me the feeling of piety. I composed for her those ardent but calm prayers which rise to Heaven like a

flame, but like a flame that no wind can make flicker. I asked her to pronounce these prayers at certain hours of the day and the night in which I would utter them myself, so that our two thoughts, united by the same words, should rise together at the same hour, in the same invocation!— And then I moistened them all with my tears, which left their traces on the words, more eloquent and more suggestive than the words themselves. I would go furtively to deposit in the post this marrow of my bones. And in returning I would experience a sensible relief, as if I had left there a portion of the weight of my own heart.

LV

But how great soever might be my continuous efforts, the perpetual tension of my young and brilliant imagination, to communicate to my letters the fire that consumed me, to create a language for my sighs, and to overcome for my soul poured out thus burning on the paper the distance which separated me from hers; in this combat against the impotence of expression I was always vanquished by Julie. Her letters had more meaning in a phrase than mine would have in eight pages; one felt her very breath in the words. Her look could be seen in the lines; the warmth of her lips that inspired them

felt in her expressions. Nothing of her had evaporated in that slow and clumsy transition from the sentiment to the word which permits the lava of the heart to cool and grow pale under the pen of man. Woman has no style, that is why she speaks so well. The style is a garment. The soul is unbared on the lips or on the hand of a woman. Like the Venus of speech, it issues from feeling in its naked beauty. It is born of itself, is astonished at its new existence, and is adored while it does not yet know that it has spoken.

LVI

What letters! what ardor! what twilights! what tints! what accents! what fire and what purity mingled together like the flame and the clearness in the diamond, like the ardor and the chastity on the forehead of a young girl who loves! what a powerful ingenuousness! what inexhaustible effusion! what sudden revivals in the midst of languor! what chants! and what cries! Then what sorrowful returnings, like the unexpected notes at the end of an air! then what caresses of words that one felt on his forehead like the breath of a fond mother playing with her smiling infant! And what a voluptuous lulling of half-spoken words and of dreamy and stammering phrases which seem to envelop you in rays, in

murmurs, in perfumes, in calm, and to conduct you insensibly by the soothing of the syllables to the repose of love, the slumber of the soul, even to the kiss on the page which says: "Farewell!" farewell and kiss both silently received, as the lips had silently impressed them!

I have found them all again, these letters. I have examined, page by page, this correspondence, classified and bound together carefully after death by the hand of a pious friendship; one letter replying to the other, from the first note to the last word written by a hand already touched by death, but which love still steadied. I have re-read them and I have burned them weeping, in secret, as if committing a crime, and in disputing twenty times with the flame a page half consumed that I might read it again!—"Why?" you ask me.—I burned them because the very ashes would have been too ardent for this world, and I have scattered them to the winds of heaven!

LVII

The day finally arrived on which I could count the hours that separated me from Julie. All the little resources that I was able to gather did not amount to the sum sufficient to enable me to spend three or four months in Paris. My mother, who saw my distress, without knowing the true cause, drew from the last of her jewel

boxes, already emptied by her tenderness, a large diamond set in a ring. Alas! it was the last remaining jewel of her youth. She slipped it secretly into my hand with tears. "I suffer as much as you, Raphael," she said, with a sad face, "to see your unprofitable youth wasted in the idleness of a little town or in reveries in the fields. I have always hoped that the gifts of God that I have blessed in you, from your earliest infancy, would make you known in the world, and open to you some career of fortune and of honor. The poverty against which we have to struggle does not permit us to open it for you ourselves. God has not willed it, up to this time. We must submit with resignation to His will, which is always for the best. With great grief, however, I see you sinking into that moral languor which succeeds to fruitless efforts. Let us try Fate once more. Go, since the earth here seems to burn beneath your feet. Live some time in Paris. Knock, with reserve and with dignity, at the doors of those old friends of the family who are to-day in good estate. Let them see the few talents that nature and study have given you. It is impossible that the heads of the new government should not seek to attach to themselves young men able, as you would be, to serve, to support, and to adorn the reign of the princes whom God has restored to us. Your poor father has much trouble to educate his six children and not to fall below the dignity of his rank in the poverty of our rustic life. Your other relatives are good and

kind, but they will not understand that breathing-space and action are necessary to the devouring activity of the mind at twenty. Here is my last jewel. I promised my mother never to dispose of it without a supreme necessity. Take it and sell it; may it serve to keep you a few weeks longer in Paris! It is the last gage of tenderness which I throw into the lottery of Providence for you. It will bring you happiness, for I give with this ring all my prayers, all my tenderness, and all my solicitude for you."

I took the ring, kissing my mother's hand and letting a tear fall on the diamond. Alas! it did not serve me to seek or to gain the favor of great men or of princes, who turned away from my obscurity, but it enabled me to live three months of that divine life of the heart of which one day is worth centuries of greatness. This sacred diamond was for me the pearl of Cleopatra dissolved in the cup of my life from which I drank for a short time of love and of happiness!

LVIII

I changed completely my habits from that day, from respect for my poor mother's repeated sacrifices and the concentration of all my thoughts in this one: to see her again whom I loved and to prolong as much as

possible and by the exercise of the strictest economy the allotted time which I had to spend with Julie. I became as calculating and as sparing as an old miser of the little gold I took with me. It seemed to me that each little amount that I expended was an hour of my happiness or a drop of my life wasted. I resolved to live like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, on little or nothing, and to retrench from my vanity, from my clothing, from my nourishment, all that I wished to bestow on the rapture of my soul. However, I was not without some undefined hope of being able to make some use of my talent in the cause of my love; this talent was known only to a few friends, by some verses. During the three months that had just elapsed, I had written in my hours of sleeplessness a little volume of poetry, amatory, meditative, or pious, according as my imagination chanted tender or grave notes. I had copied this collection with care, and in my finest handwriting; I had read them in part to my father, an excellent judge, but severe in his taste. Some friends had retained some of these fragments in their memory. I had bound my poetic treasure in green boards; a color of good augury for a glory yet all in hope. But I had concealed it from my mother, whose chaste and pious purity of spirit would have been alarmed by the voluptuousness, rather antique than Christian, of some of these elegies. I hoped that the ingenuous gracefulness and the winged enthusiasm of these verses might attract

some intelligent publisher, that he might buy my volume, or that he might at least consent to publish it at his own expense, and that the public taste, tempted by the novelty of the style born in the woods and fresh from the springs, might bring me perhaps at once a little fortune and a name.

LIX

I had no need to trouble myself to find a lodging in Paris. One of my friends, the young Count de V——, recently returned from his travels, was to spend the winter and the spring there. He had offered to share with me a little *entresol* that he occupied, over the rooms of the concierge, in the magnificent hotel of the Maréchal de Richelieu, in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin, since demolished. The Count de V——, with whom I was in almost daily correspondence, knew all. I had given him a letter of introduction to Julie, in order that he might know the soul of my soul, and that he might understand, if not my delirium, at least my adoration, for this woman. At first sight, he did comprehend, in fact, and almost shared, my enthusiasm. The letters which he wrote to me were marked by a respectful and almost pious tenderness for that fair vision of melancholy suspended between death and life, but

detained, he said, by the ineffable love she bore to me. He always spoke of her to me as a heavenly gift which God had sent to my eyes and my heart, and which would elevate me above human nature as long as I remained enveloped in her divine radiance. Convinced of the holy and supernatural nature of our love, V—— considered it as a virtue. He had no scruples at being the confidant and the intermediary. Julie, on her part, spoke of V—— as the only friend worthy of me for whom she would wish to increase my friendship, instead of taking any part of it away through a narrow jealousy of the heart. Both of them urged me to come to Paris. V—— alone was acquainted with the secret motives and the strictly material impossibility which had detained me till then. Notwithstanding all his devotion for me during the difficult period of my life, of which he has since given me so many proofs up to his death, it was not in his power at that time to remove these obstacles. His mother had exhausted her means to give him an education worthy of his rank and to allow him to travel through Europe. He was himself deeply in debt at his return. He could only offer me a corner in the apartments that his family provided for him. As to all the rest, he was, at that time of his life, as poor and as much enslaved as myself by that want so cruelly defined by Juvenal: *Res angusta domi*.

I set out from M—— in one of those little one-horse wagons formed of a wooden seat on the axle-tree and

four poles rising from the shafts which support a tarpaulin for shelter in case of rain. They were drawn by one horse only and had relays every four or five leagues, in the little straggling villages. They served to conduct from Lyons to Paris the masons from the Bourbonnais and from Auvergne, foot-passengers weary of walking, and the poor foot-sore soldiers who thus gained a stage by the payment of a few sous. I felt neither shame nor inconvenience at this common mode of travelling. I would have been willing to have made the journey barefooted in the snow and would not have felt any less proud or less happy. By this means, I saved one or two louis with which I would buy a few days of happiness. I arrived at the barrier of Paris without having been conscious of one of the stones of the road. The night was dark, and it was raining hard. I took my portmanteau on my shoulder and went to knock at the door of the modest lodging of the Count de V——.

He was waiting for me; he embraced me, and spoke of her. I could not keep myself from questioning him of her and hearing of her. That very evening I would see Julie!—— V—— was to go to announce my arrival to her and prepare her for this joy. When every visitor had retired from her salon, he would be the last to leave, he would come to notify me, in a neighboring café where I would be waiting, of the moment when she would be alone and I could go and throw myself at her feet. It was not until he had given me all these details that I

thought to dry my clothes at his fire, to take a little nourishment, and to install myself in the dark alcove of his anteroom. This antechamber was lit by a round window and heated by a stove. I dressed myself neatly and simply, that I might not cause her I loved to blush for me before her friends.

At eleven o'clock, V—— and I went out on foot. We walked together as far as under the window which I already knew. There were three carriages at the door. V—— entered, and I went to wait for him at the designated place. How long it was, that hour in which I waited for him! How I execrated the visitors, indifferent ones, perhaps, who, involuntarily importunate, coming to dispose of their idle hours, delayed without knowing it the reunion of two hearts who counted their martyrdom by their palpitations. At last, V—— appeared. I followed him rapidly. He left me at the door, and I ascended.

LX

If I were to live a thousand years, I should never forget that moment and that sight. She was standing, in the light, her elbow resting carelessly on the white marble of the chimney-piece, her slender figure, her shoulders, and her profile reflected and doubled by the mirror, her face turned toward the door, her eyes fixed on a little

darkened corridor which led into the salon, her head a little forward and inclined to one side, in the attitude of one listening for the noise of approaching footsteps. She was dressed in a mourning-dress of black silk, trimmed with black lace around the throat, the waist, and the feet. This lace, rumpled by the cushions of the sofa to which her indolent and languid life confined her, resembled the black clusters of the elder shaken out by the autumnal wind.

The dark color of this costume left only her shoulders, her neck, and her face in the light. The mourning of the robe was completed by the natural mourning of her black hair knotted at the back of her head. The uniformity of this color seemed to add to her height and to emphasize her graceful and flexible figure. The reflection of the firelight in the glass, the light of a lamp placed on the chimney-piece, and which shone on her cheek, the animation of expectancy, of impatience, and of love, shed on her countenance such a splendor of youth, of coloration, and of life that it seemed like a transfiguration by love !

My first exclamation was one of joy and delighted surprise at seeing her thus, more living, lovely, and immortal in my eyes than I had ever seen her in the softest sunlight of Savoy. A feeling of deceitful security and of eternal possession entered into my heart with the impression of her image in my eyes. She endeavored to stammer forth a few words on seeing me. She could

not. Emotion made her lips tremble. I fell at her feet; I pressed my lips to the carpet on which she stood. I lifted my face to look at her again and to assure myself that her presence was not a dream. She placed one of her hands on my hair, which thrilled at the touch, and sustaining herself with the other on the angle of the marble, she, too, fell on her knees, before me. We gazed at each other at a distance. We sought for words, but found none for excess of joy. We remained silent, without other language than that silence and our mutual prostration. This prostration was full of adoration for me; of concentrated happiness for her; it was an attitude which said, clearly enough: "They adore each other; but there is a phantom of death between them; and though they intoxicate themselves by looking at each other, they will never be clasped in each other's arms!"

LXI

I do not know how many minutes we remained thus, nor how many thousands of interrogations and of responses, of floods of tears and of waves of joy, passed thus without expressing themselves between her mute lips and my closed ones, between her moist eyes and mine, between her countenance and mine. Happiness

had struck us with immobility. Time was no more. It was already eternity for us in an instant !

A stroke of a knocker was heard at the door. Foot-steps were mounting the stairway. I rose ; she resumed, staggering slightly, her place on the sofa. I seated myself at the other side, in the shadow, to hide the redness of my cheeks and the wetness of my tears. A man of an advanced age, of an imposing stature, with a noble visage, beaming and gentle, entered the room with slow steps. He approached the sofa, without speaking, and paternally kissed the trembling hand of Julie. It was Monsieur de Bonald. Spite of the painful breaking of ecstasy which the stroke of the knocker had produced in me, I inwardly blessed Monsieur de Bonald for having come to interrupt a first look in which reason might have succumbed to rapture. It was one of those moments in which the soul has need of that ice which the word of the wise may throw on the fire of the senses, to retemper, as it were, the spring of an energetic resolution.

LXII

Julie presented me to Monsieur de Bonald as the young man whose verses he had read. He was surprised at my youth, he received me with indulgence. He conversed with Julie with that paternal familiarity of a man illustrious

by genius and serene by age who seeks in the company of a young and lovely woman a passing ray of beauty for his eyes and some calm hours of communion at the close of the day. His voice was deep, as of one that comes from the soul. His conversation flowed with that graceful and serious ease of a mind which seeks to unbend in repose. The accent of an honest man was in his speech, as the character was stamped on his brow. The conversation lengthening, and the clock being on the point of striking twelve, I thought it best to take my leave first, to prevent any shadow of suspicion of a too intimate familiarity in the breast of this friend, older and more respectable than I in the family. I carried away with me only one look and a silence, as the reward of a so long and ardent expectation and a so weary journey. But I carried away her image with me, and the certainty of seeing her henceforth every day; it was enough; it was too much. I wandered a long time on the quays of Paris, opening my cloak to the air and my lips to the wind to refresh my chest and to cool the fever of happiness which agitated me. When I returned, V—— had been sleeping for several hours. I was not able to find slumber myself until the first light of the morning and the first cries of the hawkers in the streets of Paris.

* * * * *

These days were the most unchanging of my life, because they consisted of but one thought treasured up

in my soul and in my countenance even, like a perfume which one fears will vanish in the air if the vase is exposed in any degree.

I would rise with the first rays of light, which penetrated somewhat tardily into the little anteroom where my friend sheltered me like a beggar of love. I commenced my day by a long letter to Julie. I resumed with her, in somewhat calmer mood, the conversation of the preceding evening. I developed the thoughts that had come to me after having quitted her. Tender forgetfulnesses, delightful remorse of love, of which it accuses itself, with which it reproaches itself, and which deprive it of all repose until it has repaired them; diamonds fallen from the soul or from the lips of the loved object, which carry the feet of the lover back on his steps to gather them up and increase the treasures of his sentiments. Julie received this letter, at her awakening, like a continuation of the conversation of the evening which had gone on in her chamber in an undertone during her slumbers. I received her response before the middle of the day.

My heart being thus appeased of the trouble of the night, my next thought was to calm the impatience for the interview of the evening coming, which began to take possession of me. I strove to find strong diversions, not for my soul, but for my thoughts and my eyes. I had imposed on myself long hours of reading, of study, and of work, in order to make the time disappear

between the hour when I left Julie and the hour when I should see her again. I wished to improve myself, not for others, but for her. I wished that he whom she loved should not, at least, make her blush for her preference; that the superior men who formed her society and who sometimes met me in her salon, like a modest sphinx standing in the corner of her chimney, or like a statue of contemplation, should discover, if by chance they addressed me, a soul, an intelligence, a hope, a future, under the exterior of this young, timid, and silent unknown. And then I had I do not know what confused dreams of brilliant action, of an active destiny which should seize me perhaps some day, as the whirlwind wrests the leaf from the tree in my father's humble garden to lift it high in the air; a destiny during which Julie would enjoy watching me from afar combat with fortune, struggle against men, elevate myself in strength, in grandeur, in virtue, and secretly glory herself in having discovered me before the crowd had done so, and in having loved me before posterity!

LXIII

All this, and still more, the forced leisure to which the obsession of a single thought, the disdain of all the rest, the want of money which forbade me seeking any

other distraction, and the claustral reclusion in which I lived, condemned me to a life of study more intense and more passionate than any I had ever led before. I passed the entire day seated before a little writing-table lit by a window which opened on the court of the Hôtel de Richelieu. A tile stove warmed the chamber; a screen surrounded the table and chair. It protected me against the observation of the young men of fashion who frequently came to visit my friend. There were in the spacious court below sounds of carriages, then silence, and sometimes bright rays of the winter sun combating the fog which filled the streets of Paris. These noises and this silence recalled to me in a measure the play of the light, the sound of the wind, and the transparent mists of my mountains.

Sometimes I saw playing around a charming little boy of eight or ten years of age. He was the son of the concierge. His head, like that of a suffering angel, his pretty uncovered hair curling on his forehead, his intelligent and sensitive countenance, reminded me of the innocent faces of the children of my own country. His family had, in fact, come from a village in the neighborhood of that of my father, having fallen into poverty and been transported to Paris. This child finally conceived an attachment for me, from seeing me always at my window above the room of his mother. He devoted himself voluntarily and gratuitously to my service. He executed all my commissions in the street, brought me

the bread, a little cheese, and fruit for my breakfast ; he went every morning to buy for me my provisions at the grocer's. I took this frugal repast on my working-table, in the midst of open books and interrupted pages.

The child had a black dog, that had been left by some stranger in the hotel. The child and the dog never left each other. The animal became attached to me, like the child. They never wished to descend again the little wooden stairway, once they had mounted it. During the greater part of the day, they lay and played together on the mat at my feet, under the table. Later, I took the dog with me when I left Paris, and I kept him for many years with me as a souvenir, faithful and loving, of this time of solitude. I lost him, not without tears, in 1820, in crossing the forests of the Pontine Marshes, between Rome and Terracina. The poor child has become a man. He has learned the art of engraving, which he practises ably at Lyons. Having heard my name since, in his engraving-room, he came to see me, and he wept with joy at meeting me again, and with sorrow on hearing of the death of the dog. Poor heart of man ! that requires everything of what it has once loved, and that sheds tears of the same water for the loss of an empire or for the loss of an animal !——

LXIV

During the thousands of hours in which I was thus confined between the stove, the screen, the window, the child, and the dog, I read over again all that antiquity has written, excepting only the poets, with whom we had been saturated at college and in whose verses our fatigued eyes were then no longer able to distinguish anything but the *cæsura* and the long and short syllables. Sad effect of a precocious satiety, which withers for the mind of a child the flower of the most color and the most perfume that human thought has produced. But I re-read all the philosophers, all the orators, and all the historians, in their own tongues. I loved especially those who united the three great faculties of intelligence, narration, eloquence, and reflection; the fact, the discourse, and the moral. Thucydides and Tacitus above all others; then Machiavelli, that sublime practitioner of the maladies of empires. Then Cicero, that sonorous vase which contains all, from the private tears of the man, the husband, the father, the friend, up to the catastrophes of Rome and of the world, even to the tragic forebodings of his own destiny. Cicero is like a filter, in which all these waters settle and clarify on a foundation of philosophy and divine serenity, and from which they afterward escape in expressing his great soul in floods

of eloquence, of wisdom, of piety, and of harmony. I had, till then, thought him a great and empty speaker, enclosing but little meaning in his long periods; I was mistaken. His is the human speech of antiquity, after Plato; it is the grandest style of any language. We suppose him meagre, because his drapery is so magnificent. But take away the purple, and there still remains a great soul, which has felt all, comprehended all, and said all that there was to comprehend, to feel, and to say of the Rome of his time.

LXV

As to Tacitus, I did not even attempt to combat my partiality for him. I preferred him even to Thucydides, the Demosthenes of history. Thucydides exposes more than he can make live and palpitate; Tacitus is not the historian, but a compendium of mankind. His recital is the reproduction of the event in the heart of a man free, virtuous, and feeling. The thrill that one feels as one reads not only passes over the flesh, but is a thrill of the soul. His sensibility is more than emotion, it is pity. His judgments are more than vengeance, they are justice. His indignation is more than anger, it is virtue. Our own souls seem to mingle with his, and we are proud

of our kindred with him. Would you render crime impossible to your sons? would you inspire them with a love of virtue? Rear them in the love of Tacitus. If they do not become heroes at such a school, it is because nature has made them cowardly and vile. A people who had Tacitus for their political gospel would rise above the common stature of the nations. Such a people would carry out before God the tragic drama of humanity in all its grandeur and in all its majesty. As for me, I owe to this writer, not all the fibres of the flesh, but all the metallic fibres of my being. It was he who tempered them. If ever our vulgar day should rise to the tragic grandeur of his time, and I might become the worthy victim of a worthy cause, I would say, in dying: "Give the honor of my life and of my death to the master, and not to the disciple; for it is Tacitus who has lived, and who dies, in me!"

LXVI

I had also a passionate admiration for the orators. I studied them with the presentiment of a man who would one day have to speak to the deaf multitude and to study in advance the chords of human auditories: Demosthenes, Cicero, Mirabeau; above all, Lord Chatham, more

modern and more striking, in my eyes, than all the others, because his inspired and lyrical eloquence is a cry rather than a voice. This eloquence soars above the limited audience and over the passions of the day to the everlasting regions of eternal verity and of eternal feeling. Chatham takes the truth from the hand of God, and he makes of it not only the light, but the thunder, of the debate. Unfortunately, there only remain to us of him, as of Phidias at the Parthenon, fragments,—heads, arms, and mutilated torsos. But in reassembling these remains in our thoughts, we seem to produce prodigies and divinities of eloquence. I pictured to myself times, circumstances, passions, ambitions, a forum, such as those of these great men, and, like Demosthenes to the waves of the sea, I spoke inwardly to the phantoms of my imagination.

LXVII

I read for the first time, at this epoch, the discourses of Fox and of Pitt. I found Fox declamatory, although prosaic,—one of those quibbling geniuses born to gainsay and not to say ; lawyers without gowns, who carry their conscience only in their voice and who plead only for their own popularity. I felt in Pitt the statesman,

whose words were deeds, and who, in the crumbling of Europe, sustained almost alone his own country on the foundation of his sound sense and on the constancy of his character. Pitt was Mirabeau, with more integrity and less impulse. Mirabeau and Pitt became, and have since remained, my favorite statesmen of modern days. Montesquieu appeared to me, beside them, only an erudite, ingenious, and systematic dissertator; Fénelon, divine but chimerical; Rousseau, more passionate than inspired, a grand instinct rather than a great truthfulness; Bossuet, a golden tongue and fawning soul, uniting in his conduct and in his language before Louis XIV. the despotism of a doctor and the complaisance of a courtier.

From these historical and oratorical studies I passed naturally to politics. The remembrance of the imperial yoke, which had just been shaken off, and the abhorrence of the military rule to which we had been subjected, naturally impelled me toward liberty. Family traditions, the influence of friendships, the pathos in the situation of that royal family passing from the throne to the scaffold and into exile, and brought back from exile to the throne; that orphan princess in the palace of her fathers; those old men, crowned by their misfortunes as well as by their ancestors; those princes from whom their youth and their misfortunes, severe masters, permitted so much to be hoped,—all this made me desire that the ancient throne and the new-born liberty might

be made to accord with the monarchy of our fathers. The government would thus enjoy two of the greatest prestiges of human affairs, — antiquity and novelty, memory and hope. It was a fair dream, and one natural to my age.

Each succeeding day, however, dispelled a portion of this dream. I perceived with grief that old forms but ill contain new ideas and that never would the monarchy and liberty hold together in one bond without a perpetual struggle, that this struggle would exhaust the forces of the State, that the monarch would be perpetually suspected and liberty perpetually betrayed.

LXVIII

From these general studies I turned, during several months, to another which, perhaps, engrossed my mind the more from the very aridity, dryness, and coldness of its nature, so repugnant, it might be thought, to the heart of a young man intoxicated with imagination and love. I mean political economy, or the science of the riches of nations. V—— had taken it up, with more curiosity than ardor. The Italian, English, and French books written on this science strewed his tables and his shelves. We read them together, discussing them and

writing down the reflections which the reading suggested to us. This science of political economy which then laid down, as it does to-day, more axioms than truths, and proposed more problems than it can solve, had precisely for us the charm of mystery. It became, moreover, between us the interminable theme for those lip conversations which exercise the intelligence without engrossing the mind, and permit of the consciousness, even while talking, of the one secret and continuous thought hidden at the bottom of the heart; a species of enigmas of which one seeks the answer without any immense interest in finding it. After having read all, discussed all, and noted all that then constituted that science, I thought I could distinguish a few theoretical principles, true in their generality, doubtful in their application, ambitious in their pretension to be classed among the absolute verities, often empty and misleading in their formulas. I had nothing to reply, but my instinct for positive evidence was not thoroughly satisfied. I threw down the books, and awaited some light. This science at that time did not exist. An entirely experimental science, it had neither sufficient age nor maturity to permit it to affirm so much. Since then, it has grown older, it promises to statesmen a few dogmas to apply partially to human society, a few sources of general comfort, and some new ties of fraternity to strengthen the relations between the nations.

LXIX

I varied these serious studies with one which had always attracted me since my childhood,—that of diplomacy, or the laws of intercourse between governments. Chance directed me to the fountain-head. I had written, during my studies in political economy, a pamphlet of about a hundred pages on a subject which was then occupying a large share of the public attention. The title of this pamphlet was: *What is the place which a nobility can occupy in France under a constitutional government?* I treated this question, a very delicate one at the time, with the instinctive good sense that nature had given me, and with that impartiality of a young and independent mind which elevates itself without effort above the vanities from above, the envies from below, and the prejudices of the day. I spoke with love for the people, with intelligence of our institutions, with respect for that historic nobility whose names had long been the name of France herself on the fields of battle, in our magistracy, and in foreign lands. I concluded by advocating the suppression of all privileges of nobility, save the memory of the peoples which cannot be suppressed. I demanded an elective peerage, and I demonstrated that, in a free country, there could be no other nobility than that of election, a perpetual stimulus to the service of

the nation, and a temporary reward of the merit or the virtue of its citizens.

Julie, to whom I had lent this manuscript, that I might share with her the half of my works as of my life, had given it to a distinguished man of her intimate society, for whose judgment she entertained a great respect. This was Monsieur M——, a worthy son of the illustrious member of the Constituent Assembly, long private secretary of the emperor, and now a constitutional royalist; one of those minds which have no youth, which are born mature, and which die young, leaving behind them a great void in their epoch. Monsieur M——, after having read my work, asked Julie the name of the man of politics who had written it. She smiled, and confessed that it was the production of a very young man who had neither name nor experience, nor previous acquaintance with political affairs. Monsieur M—— wished to see me that he might believe. I was presented to him. He received me with a kindness which afterward ripened into friendship, and which never after failed me until his death. I did not publish my pamphlet, but Monsieur M—— introduced me to his friend, Monsieur de Rayneval, a man of luminous understanding, open heart, and of an attractive and cheerful though laborious and grave mind. He was at that time the life of our foreign policy. He died not long ago while ambassador at Madrid. Monsieur de Rayneval, who had read my work, welcomed me in his house with that encouraging

graciousness and with that cordial smile which suppress distance and which win at first sight the heart of a young man. He was one of those men from whom it is pleasant to learn, because they seem, so to speak, to expand in teaching and to give rather than to prescribe. One learned more of Europe in a few mornings' conversation with this charming man than in a whole diplomatic library. He possessed tact, that innate genius of negotiations. I owe to him my taste for those high political affairs which he handled with full consciousness of their importance, but without seeming to feel their weight. His strength rendered everything easy, and his ease infused grace and heart into business. He encouraged in me the desire to enter the diplomatic career, he introduced me himself in the bureau of Monsieur d'Hauterive, director of the archives, and authorized him to allow me access to the records of our diplomatic negotiations. Monsieur d'Hauterive, who had grown gray over dispatches, was as the unalterable tradition and the living dogma of our diplomacy. With his commanding figure, his hollow voice, his tufted and powdered hair, and his bushy eyebrows shading a deep-set and dim eye, he had the air of a living, speaking century. He received me as a father, happy to transmit to me the inheritance of his hoarded knowledge; he made me read, examine, and take notes under his eyes, in his cabinet. Twice a week, I went to study several hours under his direction. I still cherish the memory of this

green and generous old age which thus so freely bestowed itself upon a young man whose name even he did not know. Monsieur d'Hauterive died during the combat of July, 1830, amid the roar of the cannon which demolished the politics of the house of Bourbon, and the treaties of 1815.

LXX

Such were the occupations, entirely studious and entirely meditative, of my days. I desired nothing more; even my ambition to enter on a career was only, at bottom, that of my mother, and the sorrow of expending her diamond without bringing her in return some compensation in an amelioration of my affairs. I might have been offered at that time an embassy to leave Paris and a palace to quit my truckle-bed in my anteroom, and I would have closed my eyes not to see Fortune and my ears not to hear her. I was too happy in my obscurity because of the ray, invisible to others, which warmed and illuminated my darkness.

My happiness dawned as the day declined. I dined, ordinarily, alone in my cell. Some bread, a slice of boiled beef seasoned with parsley, and a salad of some roots, composed my repast usually. I drank only water,

to save the expense of the little wine necessary to correct the insipid and often unwholesome water of Paris. Twenty sous a day thus sufficed for my dinner. This repast nourished also the poor dog who had adopted me. After dinner, I threw myself on my bed, overcome by the solitude and the labor of the day; I thus abridged by slumber the long nocturnal hours which separated me still from the only moment when time really began for me; hours which the youth of my own age spend, as I had done myself before my transformation, in theatres, in public places, and in the costly amusements of a capital.

At eleven o'clock I awoke. I dressed myself with the decent simplicity of a young man whose face, figure, and well-arranged hair set him off a little. Carefully shod feet, white linen, a coat always black, brushed by my own hands, buttoned up to the throat like the costume of the young students of the Middle Ages, a military cloak thrown in heavy folds over the left shoulder and preserving the coat from being splashed in the street, such was the uniform, simple, and modest costume which, without betraying my situation, pretending neither to luxury nor poverty, permitted me to pass from my solitude to a salon without attracting, but without offending, the eyes of the indifferent.

I went out on foot, for the price of a carriage would have cost me one day of my life. I followed the sidewalks, keeping close to the walls and avoiding the wheels.

I walked slowly on tiptoe to preserve my costume from the mud, which in a salon lit by candles would have betrayed the humble pedestrian. I did not hasten, for I knew that Julie received every evening the friends of her husband in her chamber or in her salon. I wished to wait till the last carriage had quitted the door before knocking. This reserve on my part arose not only from the desire to avoid the observations which might be made on the constant presence of a young unknown in the house of so young and beautiful a woman, but above all that I might not be obliged to share her looks and her words with the indifferent persons with whom she was constrained at that hour to sustain and to lighten the conversation. It seemed to me that each one carried away from me a part of her presence and of her soul. To see her, to hear her, and not to possess her alone, was often a harder trial for me than not to see her at all.

LXXI

To pass away the time, I used to walk from one end to the other of a bridge which crossed the Seine almost opposite the house of Julie. How many thousand times have I not counted the planks of this bridge which resounded beneath my feet! How many pieces of copper

coin have I not thrown, in passing and repassing, in the tin cup of the poor blind man seated in the snow or in the rain against the parapet of this bridge! I prayed that my mite, which rang in the heart of the poor and from there in the ear of God, might obtain for me in return the departure of some importunate who delayed my happiness and the security of a long evening.

Julie, who knew my dislike to meeting strangers in her house, had arranged with me a signal which should inform me from afar of the absence or presence of visitors in her little salon. When there was a throng, the two interior shutters of the window were closed; I could then see only the feeble light of the candles filter between the two leaves. When there were only one or two familiar friends, ready to retire, one of the shutters was closed. Finally, when everybody had left, the two leaves were opened, as well as the curtains, so that I could see from the other side of the Seine the light of the lamp placed on the table, before which she read or wrote while waiting for me. My eyes never lost sight of this distant light, visible and intelligible for me alone in the midst of all these thousands of lights from windows, street-lamps, shops, carriages, cafés, and these avenues of movable or immovable fires which illuminate at night the façades and the horizons of Paris. All these other illuminations disappeared for me. There was no other light on earth, no other star in the firmament, than that little oval window like an eye opened on me

to seek me in the obscurity, and toward which my eyes, my thought, my soul, were ceaselessly and solely turned. Oh, incomprehensible puissance of this infinite nature of man which can fill the space of a thousand universes and find them all too narrow for his universality! or which can concentrate itself in one little luminous point shining across the mist of a river, among the sea of lights of an immense city, and find its infinity of desires, of sentiments, of intelligence, and of love in this one shining spark which scarcely rivals the light of a glowworm on a summer night! How many times have I thought this on my darkened bridge, walking with my cloak up to my eyes, to and fro! How many times have I not cried, in looking at that oval point of light shining in the distance: "O God! let all the lights of the earth be quenched, extinguish all the luminous globes of the firmament, but leave this little spark to shine eternally, mysterious star of two lives. And this light will sufficiently illumine all the worlds, and will suffice, during eternity, for my eyes!"

Alas! I have seen it since extinguished, this star of my youth, this beacon of my eyes and of my heart. I have seen the shutters of the window remain closed for long years on the funereal darkness of the little room. Then I saw them open again one day, one year. And then I dared to look to see who ventured to live there where she had lived. And I saw appear there, in summertime, on the sill of this window, flooded with sunshine

and gay with vases of flowers, an unknown young woman playing and smiling with a new-born infant, without any suspicion that she was playing upon a grave, that her smiles became tears in the eyes of a passer-by, and that this life of hers was an irony of death.—— Since then, I return often in the night, and I go back there still, every year, approach with faltering steps to the wall, touch the door, seat myself on the stone bench, watch the lights, listen to the sounds from above, and picture to myself for the moment that I see the reflection of her lamp's light, that I hear the sound of her voice, that I am about to go and knock at her door, that she is waiting for me and that I am to enter!—— O Memory! art thou a gift of Heaven, or a torment of hell?——

But pardon me, my friend; I resume my story, since you desire it.

LXXII

Julie had presented me, the day after my arrival, to the old man who was to her a father, and whose declining years she brightened with the radiance of her soul, with her tenderness and her beauty. He had received me as a second son. He knew through her of our meeting in Savoy, of our fraternal attachment for each other, of our

daily correspondence, and of the affinity of our souls revealed by the conformity of our instincts, our ages, and our feelings. He knew of the perfect purity of this attachment, which nature and society would forbid us from ever changing. He felt neither inquietude nor jealousy, save for the happiness, the reputation, and the life of his ward. He feared only that she might have been attracted and deceived by those first regards which are sometimes the revelation, sometimes the illusion, of young women, and that she might have given her heart to a man created by her own fancy. My letters, from which she had read to him numerous passages, had, however, somewhat reassured him. My countenance alone could certify to him whether my sentiments in these letters were those of nature, or of art, for style may deceive, but the visage never can.

The old man examined me with that attention, somewhat disquieted, which is concealed under the appearance of momentary reserve. But in proportion as he looked at me longer, and interrogated me, I saw this glance become open, light up with interior satisfaction, grow tender with confidence and with welcome, and rest on me with that security and that caress of the eye which are the silent words, but the best, of a first interview. The ardent desire to please the old man, the timidity natural to a young one who feels that the fate of his heart depends upon the judgment which is to be pronounced upon him, the fear that this impression may

be an unfavorable one, the presence of Julie, who troubled while she encouraged me,—all these shades of my thought, visible in the modesty of my attitude and the redness of my cheeks, spoke for me doubtless better than I could have spoken for myself. The old man took my hands with a gesture quite paternal, and said to me: “Reassure yourself, monsieur, and count upon two friendships in this house, instead of one. Julie could not have better chosen a brother, nor can I, a son.” He embraced me, and we conversed as if he had known me since my childhood, up to the hour of ten o’clock, at which an old servant came regularly every evening to give him his arm to support him to his own apartment.

LXXIII

His was a beautiful and attractive old age, for which nothing more could be wished than the security of a morrow. This old age, entirely disinterested and entirely paternal, in no way offended when seen at the side of this youthful woman. It was as an evening shadow covering the brightness of the morning. But you felt that this shade was protective, and that it sheltered all without withering in the least this youth, this innocence, and this beauty.

The features of this illustrious man were as regular as those pure lines of the antique profiles which time wears away somewhat without altering. His blue eyes had that softened, but penetrating, regard of a long-used sight, as though looking through a slight mist. His mouth was as fine as an epigram, pleasant as the smile of a father on his little children. His hair, thinned by age and study, was soft and fine as the down of a swan. His hands were taper and white as the marble hands of the statue of Seneca dying, taking his leave of Paulina. His visage, thin and pale through long mental labor, had no wrinkles, for it had never had any superfluous flesh. Some blue and almost bloodless veins only might be traced in the depressed temples. His forehead, that feature which the thoughts model and polish as the last beauty of man, reflected the lights of the hearth. In the cheeks was that delicacy of the skin, that transparency of tint, of a visage that has grown old within walls and never been tanned by wind and sun,—that feminine complexion which the close of life gives to old men. It lends to them something ærial, fugitive, and impalpable, as of a shade which a too strong breath might dispel. His seasonable and well-chosen words, set naturally in brief, clear, and luminous phrases, were marked by the precision of a speaker who had long chosen carefully, both in dictating and in writing, the forms of his thoughts. He interrupted these phrases with long silences, as if to

give them time to penetrate the ear and be appreciated by the mind of the listener. And he relieved them from time to time by a pleasantry always gracious, never cynical, like wings with which he wished to lift now and then the conversation, so that it might not grow too heavy under the weight of too continuous ideas.

LXXIV

I soon learned to love this wise and charming old man. If I should grow old, I should hope to age as he did. One thing only grieved me as I regarded him,—to see him advancing with a serene step toward death without belief in immortality. The natural sciences, which he had deeply studied, had accustomed his mind to trust exclusively to the judgment of his senses; that which was not palpable did not exist for him, that which was not calculable did not possess any element of certainty in his eyes; matter and number composed for him the universe; figures were his God; the phenomena of Nature were his revelation; Nature was his Bible and his gospel; his virtue was an instinct,—not seeing that numbers, phenomena, nature, and virtue are only hieroglyphs written on the veil of

the temple and of which the unanimous meaning is—Deity. Sublime but unyielding spirits, who mount marvellously, step by step, the ladder of science, but without ever wishing to pass the last one which leads to God !

LXXV

This second father soon became so much attached to me that he wished to give me occasionally in the morning, in his library, some lessons in those elevated sciences which had rendered him illustrious, and which now constituted his chief relaxation.

I went to him sometimes in the morning. Julie would often come at the same hour. It was a rare and touching spectacle, that of this old man seated in the midst of those books—a monument of that human knowledge and philosophy of which he had exhausted the stores during his life—opening the mysteries of nature and of thought to a young man standing behind him, while a woman, beautiful and young as the Beatrice of the Florentine poet, that ideal philosophy, that loving wisdom, served as the first disciple to the old man and as fellow-disciple to the younger. She brought the books, turned the leaves, marked with her pretty rosy finger the chapter ; she moved around among the

spheres, the globes, the instruments, the piles of volumes, in that dust of human knowledge; she seemed like the soul of nature disengaging itself from that matter, to kindle it and to teach it to burn and to love.

In a few days I had learned and comprehended more than in years of dry and solitary study.

The master's infirmities of age only too often interrupted for us these conversations and lessons of the mornings.

LXXVI

But I continued to go every evening to spend a portion of my night in converse with her who was, in herself alone, the night and the day, time and eternity, for me. As I have already related, I was in the habit of arriving at the moment when the importunate visitors had quitted her salon. Sometimes I was obliged to remain for long hours on the bridge or on the quay, walking and stopping alternately, and vainly waiting for the moment when the interior shutters should open entirely, or half-way, to attract my attention by the mute signal agreed upon. How many of the idle waves of the Seine, carrying away with them under the arches of the bridges the floating light of the moon, or the

reflections from the windows of the city, have I not followed thus in their flight! How many hours and half-hours struck by the clocks of the neighboring or distant churches have I not thus counted, cursing them for their slowness, or accusing them of too much haste! I came to know the tones of these brazen voices in all the towers of Paris. There were lucky and unlucky days. Sometimes I went in without having had to wait one instant; I would then find with her only her husband, spending in lively talk and pleasant conversation the hours which prepared him for slumber. Sometimes I found only one or two friends of the family. They would come in for a moment, bringing the news or the sensation of the day. They gave to friendship the first hours of their evening, which they generally finished in some salon devoted to politics. These were, in general, parliamentary men, eminent orators of the two Chambers,—Suard, Bonald, Mounier, Rayneval, Lally-Tollendal, the old man with the youthful mind; Lainé, the most perfect copy of antique virtue and eloquence that I have ever venerated in our modern times. Roman at heart, in language, and in appearance, he wanted nothing but the toga to be the Cicero or the Cato of his day. I attached myself with admiration and with still more tender respect to this incarnation of a great citizen. Monsieur Lainé, in his turn, distinguished me by some look and word of preference. He has since been my master.

If I should have, some day, a country to serve or a tribune to ascend, I would keep ever before me the remembrance of his patriotism and his eloquence as a model, not to equal ever, but to imitate at a distance.

These men succeeded each other around the little work-table. Julie was usually reclining on her sofa. I remained silent and respectful in a corner of the room, at a distance from her, listening, reflecting, admiring or disapproving inwardly, but rarely speaking, at least without being interrogated, and only joining in these conversations with a few timid and reserved words uttered in a low tone. I have always had, in connection with very strong convictions, an extreme embarrassment in enunciating them before men. They seem to me infinitely superior to myself in age and in authority. Respect for age, for genius, and for fame forms a part of my nature. A ray of glory blinds me. White hairs awe me. An illustrious name makes me bow involuntarily. I have often lost something of my real value by this timidity; never, however, have I regretted it. This feeling of the superiority of others is good in youth, and at all ages. It elevates the ideal standard to which one wishes to aspire. Self-confidence is an insolence toward nature and toward time. If this feeling of the superiority of others is a delusion, it is a delusion, at least, which raises human nature. It is better than any delusion which lowers it. Alas! we but too soon reduce it to its just and sad proportions.

These visitors at first paid but little attention to me. I have seen them at times lean toward Julie and ask of her in a low tone who the young man was. My thoughtful countenance and the modest motionlessness of my attitude appeared to surprise and to please them. Insensibly they approached me, they addressed with a kindly intentioned gesture some words to me. It was like an indirect encouragement to me to take part in the conversation. I did so in a few words, to express to them my gratitude. But I soon relapsed into my silence and obscurity for fear of prolonging the conversation by keeping it up. I considered them only as the frame of the picture,—the only real interest for me lay in the visage, the speech, and the soul of her from whom I was shut out by their presence.

LXXVII

And then what inward joy, what beatings of the heart, when they finally departed, when I could hear under the gateway the rolling of the carriage which carried away the last of them! We remained alone. The night was advanced; the security of our solitary hours increased with each motion of the minute-hand approaching the hour of midnight on the face of the

clock. Nothing more was heard but the infrequent sound of a carriage on the stones of the quay, or the snoring of the old concierge who slept upon a bench in the vestibule, at the foot of the stairway.

We looked at each other without speaking at first, as if astonished at our happiness. I approached the table at the side of which Julie was working on some feminine article, by the light of the lamp. The work would escape from her unheeding fingers. Our looks expanded ; our lips were unsealed ; our hearts overflowed. Our words, restrained at first like a liquid confined by a too narrow aperture, hesitated to flow. They only delivered drop by drop the torrent of our thoughts. We could not choose quickly enough, in the confusion of things which we had to say to each other, those which were the most pressing for utterance. Sometimes there was even a long silence occasioned by the very embarrassment and the excess of words which had accumulated in our hearts without being able to issue forth. Then they would begin to flow slowly, like those first drops which decide the cloud to dissolve and to burst. These first words called forth others which replied to them. The sound of the voice of one of us led on that of the other, as a child who falls draws another down with him. Our words mingled a moment without order, without answer, and without connection ; neither of us wished to leave to the other the happiness of being the first to express the common sentiment. What either of us

disclosed of our thoughts since the conversation of the evening before, or the morning's letter, each fancied to have first felt. This tumultuous overflow, at which we finally laughed and blushed, at last subsided; it gave place to a calm expansion of speech which poured forth, together or alternately, the plenitude of its expression. It was a continuous and murmuring pouring-out of the soul of one into that of the other; an unreserved exchange of our two natures; a complete transmutation of her into me and of me into her, by the reciprocal communication of all that lived, felt, thought, or burned within us. Never, doubtless, did two beings as irreproachable in their mutual regards and even in their thoughts bare more completely their hearts before each other and reveal more spiritually the most mysterious depths of their sentiments. This innocent nudity of our souls remained chaste, though unveiled. It was like the light, which reveals everything and sullies nothing. We had nothing to reveal to each other but the spotless love which purified us as it consumed us.

This love, by its very purity, renewed itself ceaselessly with the same light in the soul, the same dew in the eyes, the same virginal transports of its first blooming. Each day was like the first day. Each moment was like that ineffable moment in which one feels it expand in himself and repeat itself in the heart and in the look of another; always flower, always perfume, always exhilaration, because the fruit is never gathered.

LXXVIII

This love employed, to manifest itself, the infinite number of methods by means of which God has permitted soul to communicate with soul across the transparent barrier of the senses,—from the look which contains most of ourselves in an almost ethereal ray, to the closed eyelid which seems to enclose within us the image received that it may never evaporate; from languor to delirium; from the sigh to the cry; from the long silence to those exhaustless words which flow from the lips without pause and without end, which stop the breath, weary the tongue, which we pronounce without hearing them ourselves, and which have, in reality, no other signification than that of an impotent effort to say, and say over again, that which can never be enough said!——

We had often thus conversed through entire hours, in low tones, our elbows on the little table, our faces close together, our mutual regards confounded in each other, without having perceived that our communion had lasted more than the space of a single sigh; both astonished that the moments had flown as rapidly as our words, and that the clock struck the inexorable hour of our parting.

Sometimes there would be interrogations and responses as to the most fugitive shades of our natures and our thoughts; dialogues in almost unheard whispers; articulated breathings rather than tangible words; blushing confessions of our most secret and our most unheard inward repinings; astonishments and exclamations of happiness at discovering in ourselves impressions similar and repeated from one to the other, like the light in the reflection, like the blow in the reaction, like the form in the image. We would exclaim, rising by a simultaneous impulse: "We are not two! we are only one sole being under two natures which deceive us. Who will say *you* to the other? Who will say *I*? There is no *I*, there is no *you*, there is but *we*!—"

And we would sink into our seats again, overcome with admiration at this marvellous conformity, weeping with delight to feel ourselves thus doubled while but one, and to have multiplied our being in giving it.

LXXIX

Sometimes, and most frequently, our minds would return, with scrupulous attention, over all the places, all the circumstances, all the hours, which had brought

about or marked the commencement of our love,—like a young girl who has lost by the way the unstrung pearls of her necklace, and who returns step by step, her eyes fixed on the path, to find them and pick them up one by one. We did not wish to lose the memory of one of those localities, of one of those hours, for fear of losing with them the memory and the avaricious enjoyment of a single one of our felicities. The mountains of Savoy; the valley of Chambéry; the cascades; the torrents; the lake; the mossy swards dark in shadow or spotted with light under the great extending arms of the chestnut-trees; the sun filtering through the branches; the sky seen through the openings of the leafy dome over our heads; the azure sheet of water and the white sails at our feet; our first involuntary interviews, from a distance, among the paths of the mountains; our mutual conjectures; our encounters on the lake when sailing in different directions, before we knew each other; her black hair blown about by the wind; my indifferent attitude; my looks averted from the crowd; the double enigma which we thus perpetually presented to each other, and of which the answer, for both of us, was to be an eternal love; then the fatal day of the tempest and of her fainting; the night of prayers, in the shadow of death and in tears; the awakening in heaven; the return together, under the avenue of poplars, by the light of the moon, my hand in her hand; her hot tears, felt and drunk; the first words in which our two souls had

escaped ; the happiness, the separation,—in fact, everything !

We could never weary ourselves with these details. It was as if we had recounted to each other some story which was not our own. But what was there thenceforward in the universe save ourselves ? O inexhaustible curiosity of love ! thou art not a puerile distraction of the hour, thou art love itself, which never tires of contemplating that which it admires, which does not wish to let escape a single impression, a hair, an eyelash, a thrill, a blush, a pallor, a sigh of the loved one, in order that it may have a reason for loving more and for throwing with each of these souvenirs something more into that flame of enthusiasm in which it rejoices itself to be consumed !

LXXX

Sometimes Julie would suddenly weep with a strange sadness,—it was to see me condemned, by this approaching death, always concealed but always present, to behold in her only a phantom of happiness which would vanish before I could press it to my heart. She sighed, she accused herself of having inspired in me a passion which could never render me happy. “Oh ! I would

wish to die, to die quickly, to die young and while still loved," she said to me. "Yes, to die, since I can be at once but the object and the bitter illusion of love and of happiness for you! your rapture and your woe both together! Ah! it is the most divine of happinesses and the most cruel of condemnations mingled in the same destiny! Oh! that love would kill me, and that you might survive to love, after me, as your nature and your heart should love! I shall be less unhappy in dying than I am in feeling that I live by your sacrifices, and that I condemn you to the perpetual death of your youth and of your happiness!"

"Oh! blasphemy against the supreme happiness!" I replied, placing my trembling hand under her eyes that her tears might fall on my fingers. "What base idea have you then conceived of him whom God has found worthy of meeting you, of comprehending you, and of loving you? Are there not more oceans of tenderness and of love in this tear which falls warm from your heart on my hand and which I drink as a drop of the blood of the divine torture of our souls, than in the thousands of sated desires and guilty pleasures in which are engulfed the vulgar attachments which you regret for me? Have I ever seemed to you to desire aught else than this twofold suffering? Does it not make of us two willing and pure victims? Is it not this eternal holocaust of love such as, perhaps, from Héloïse to us, has never before been offered to the

eyes of the angels? Have I ever once reproached destiny, even in the delirium of my solitary hours, for having elevated me by you and for you above the condition of man? It has given me to love in you, not a woman to be pressed and polluted in mortal arms, but an impalpable and sacred incarnation of immaterial beauty. Does not the celestial fire in which I burn so rapturously consume in me all the dross of vulgar desire? Does it not convert me altogether into flame? Is not this flame as pure and as soft as the rays of your soul which first kindled it and now feed it unceasingly through your eyes? Ah! Julie, conceive of yourself an idea more worthy of you, and do not weep over the sorrows which you think you inflict on me! I do not suffer. My life is a continual overflowing of happiness, filled by you alone, a peace, a sleep of which you are the dream. You have transformed me into another nature. I suffer? Ah! would that I could sometimes really suffer, so that I might have something to offer to Destiny in return for that which it has given me in you, were it only the feeling of a privation or the bitterness of a tear! for to suffer for you would be perhaps the only thing that could add a drop the more to that cup of happiness which is given to me so overflowing. To suffer thus, is it to suffer or to enjoy? No; to live thus is to die, it is true, but it is to quit a few years sooner this miserable life in order to live beforehand the life of Heaven!"

LXXXI

She believed it. I believed it in saying it myself. I joined my hands imploringly before her. We would part after such converse as this, she keeping, I carrying away with me, to feed on separately till the morrow, the impression of the last look and the echo of the last tone that were to enable us to live and wait through another long day.

I would see her open her window, when I had passed the threshold of her door, lean her elbows on the bar of iron of the balcony, between the flowers, and follow me with her eyes as long as the mist of the Seine enabled her to see my figure on the bridge. I turned round every eight or ten steps to send back my soul to her in my look and my sighs which could not disengage themselves from her. It seemed to me that my being was divided in two; my thoughts to return and dwell with her; and that my body alone, as a mere machine, regained with slow steps, in the gloom of the deserted streets, the door of the hotel to which I returned to sleep.

LXXXII

Thus passed away, without other change than that afforded by my studies and our impressions, the delightful months of the winter. They were drawing to a close. Already, the first splendors of spring were beginning to glance fitfully from the summits of the roofs upon the damp and gloomy maze of the streets of Paris. My friend V——, recalled by his mother, departed. He left me alone in the little chamber in which he had lodged me during my stay. He was to return in the autumn; he had taken his apartment for the whole year. Absent, he still extended to me his fraternal hospitality. My heart was full of anguish when I saw him depart. There was no longer any one to whom I could speak of Julie. The burden of my feelings upon my heart would now be so much the heavier since I could not share it with another heart. But it was a burden of happiness; I could still sustain it. Soon it was to become a weight of anguish that I could confide to no one, and least of all to her whom I loved.

My mother wrote me that unexpected reverses of fortune and consequent straitened means had fallen on my father with such harshness that his household, once so generous, open, and hospitable, had been so reduced as

to compel him to withdraw the half of my allowance to enable him to meet, and that only with much difficulty, the expense of maintaining and educating the six other children. It was therefore incumbent upon me, she said, either to find by my own efforts some means which would enable me to live honorably in Paris or to return to the paternal roof and share with the rest the daily bread of humbleness and resignation. My mother's tenderness sought beforehand to comfort me under this sad necessity. She painted for me the picture of the happiness which she would experience in seeing me again. She placed before me, in most attractive colors, the prospects of the field-labors and of the simple pleasures of rural life. On the other hand, some of the associates of my early disorderly years of gambling and pleasure, who had now fallen into want, having met me in Paris, had recalled to me sundry little obligations which I had contracted toward them, and begged me to come to their assistance. They stripped me thus, by degrees, of the greater part of that little hoard which I had saved by strict economy to enable me to live longer in Paris. My little purse was well-nigh empty. I began to think at last of courting fortune by fame.

One morning, after a violent struggle between timidity and love, love conquered. I concealed under my coat the little manuscript bound in green pasteboard ; it contained my verses, my last hope. I turned my steps, hesitating often and wavering in my design, toward the

house of a celebrated publisher whose name is associated with the glory of letters and of French publishing, Monsieur D——. This name attracted me at first because, independently of his celebrity as a publisher, Monsieur D—— enjoyed, in addition, at that time, some reputation as an author. He had published his own verses with all the elegance and all the pomp and circumstance of a poet who could himself control the approving voice of Fame. Arrived in the Rue Jacob at the door of Monsieur D——, that illustrious door, a redoubled effort on my part was necessary to enable me to cross the threshold, another to mount the stairs, a final one, still greater, to knock at the door of his office. But I saw behind me the adored face of Julie which encouraged me, I felt her hand which pushed me on, and I dared all.

Monsieur D——, a man of a ripe age, with a precise and commercial air, and whose speech was brief and direct like that of a man who knows the value of minutes, received me with politeness. He asked me what I had to say to him. I stammered long enough in replying, I floundered about in those involved ambiguous phrases which conceal an idea that both wishes and does not wish to get expressed. I thought to gain courage by gaining time. Finally, I unbuttoned my coat. I drew out the little volume. I presented it humbly, with a trembling hand, to Monsieur D——. I said to him that I had written these verses, that I desired to have them

published, not for the sake of glory, of which I had no ridiculous dreams, but in the hope that they might at least attract the notice and good-will of influential literary men; that my poverty would not permit me to meet the expenses of this publication; that I came to submit my work to him and to ask him to print it if, after having read it, he should judge it worthy of the indulgence or favor of cultivated minds.

Monsieur D—— smiled with an irony mingled with kindness, shook his head, took the manuscript between two fingers habituated to turning leaves disdainfully, placed it on his table, and told me to return in a week to receive his answer to my request. I went away.

These eight days appeared to me eight centuries. My future, my fortune, my fame, the consolation or the despair of my poor mother, my love,—in fact, my life and my death,—were in the hands of Monsieur D——. At times, I pictured him to myself reading my verses with the same intoxication that had dictated them to me on the mountains or on the banks of the torrents of my own country; that he found in them the dew of my soul, the tears of my eyes, the blood of my young veins; that he brought his friends together to hear these verses; that I could hear, myself, in the bottom of my alcove, their applause. At times, I blushed inwardly to have delivered to the inspection of a stranger a work so unworthy of seeing the light, to have revealed my feebleness and my incompetence in the vain hope of a

success which would change into humiliation on my forehead, instead of being changed into joy and gold in my hands.—However, hope, as obstinate as my poverty, generally obtained the upper hand in my dreams, and led me on from hour to hour up to that appointed by Monsieur D——.

LXXXIII

My heart failed me as on the eighth day I mounted his stairway. I remained a long time standing on the landing-place at his door without daring to ring. Some one came out. The door remained open. It was quite necessary that I should enter. The countenance of Monsieur D—— was as inexpressive and ambiguous as that of an oracle. He made me take a seat, and searching out my volume buried under several piles of papers, he said: “I have read your verses, monsieur. They are not without talent, but they show no study. They are entirely unlike all that is received and appreciated in our poets. It is impossible to say where you have found the language, the ideas, the images of this poetry. It cannot be classed in any definite style. It is a pity, for there is no want of harmony. Renounce these novelties which would lead astray our national genius. Read our masters, Delille, Parny, Michaud, Raynouard, Luce de

Lancival, Fontanes,—these are the poets appreciated by the public. You must resemble some one if you wish to be recognized and to be read! I should advise you ill if I induced you to publish this volume, and I should be doing you a sorry service in publishing it at my expense." So saying, he rose and handed me back my manuscript. I did not seek to contest the point with Fate, which spoke to me by the mouth of this oracle. I put the volume back under my coat. I thanked Monsieur D——, I apologized for trespassing on his time, and I descended, with shaking limbs and swimming eyes, the steps of his stairway.

Ah! if Monsieur D——, who was a kind and feeling man and patron of letters, could have read my heart and have understood that it was neither for fame nor fortune that the unknown youth came to beg, his book in his hand, but that it was life and love I asked of him, I am sure he would have printed my volume. Heaven, at least, would have repaid him!

LXXXIV

I returned to my room in despair. The child and the dog wondered for the first time at the gloom of my countenance and at my obstinate silence. I lit a

fire in the stove. I threw in it, leaf by leaf, the entire volume, without saving a page. "Since thou art not good enough to purchase me a single day of life and of love," I muttered as I watched it burn, "what does it matter if the immortality of my name is consumed with thee. My immortality, it is not glory, it is my love!"

The same evening I went out at nightfall. I sold my poor mother's diamond. I had kept it till this time, in the hope that my verses might bring me its value, and that I might be able to take it back to her. I kissed it furtively, and I wet it with my tears in giving it to the jeweler. The merchant himself was affected. He understood that I could not have stolen it in seeing the sorrow which I could not dissemble in handing it to him. In counting the thirty louis which he gave me, the gold slipped through my fingers, as though it had been the price of a sacrilege. Oh! how many diamonds of twenty times its value would I not have given many times since to be able to redeem this one, unique in my eyes, a piece of my mother's heart, one of the last tears of her eyes, the light of her love.— On what hand does it now sparkle?—

LXXXV

But the spring had arrived. The Tuileries cast each morning upon the idlers the green shade of the leaves and the fragrant snow of the chestnut-trees. From the elevation of the bridges, I could perceive, beyond the stony horizons of Chaillot and Passy, the long undulating and verdant lines of the hills of Fleury, of Meudon, and of Saint-Cloud. These hills seemed to rise like fresh and solitary islands from this chalky ocean. They stirred in my heart remorse and poignant reproaches. They were the images, the souvenirs of nature, and the thirst for her, that I had forgotten for six months. In the evening, the moon floated with her splashings of light on the tepid waters of the river. The dreamy orb opened, where the Seine disappeared in the distance, long luminous avenues and fantastic perspectives where the eye lost itself in landscapes of vapor and shadow. The soul followed involuntarily the eyes. The fronts of the shops, the balconies and the windows of the quays, were covered with vases of flowers. Their perfumes descended on the heads of the passers-by. At the corners of the streets and at the ends of the bridges, the flower-sellers, seated behind screens of flowering plants, waved branches of lilacs, as if to perfume the city. In Julie's chamber, the hearth,

converted into a mossy grotto, the consoles and tables, all supported vases of violets, roses, lilies of the valley, and primroses. Poor flowers, exiles of the fields, like swallows which have heedlessly entered a room and which brush the walls with their wings as though announcing the beautiful days of April to the dwellers in garrets. The perfume of these flowers penetrated to our hearts. Our thoughts returned naturally, carried away by these odors and this beauty, to that nature in the bosom of which we had been so alone and so happy. We had forgotten this nature, so sombre had been our days, so heavy our sky, so closed-in our horizon. Shut up in the narrow chamber where we had been to each other the entire universe, we had no longer thought that there existed another sky, another sun, another nature outside of us. These beautiful days, seen from between the roofs of an immense city, recalled it to us. They troubled us, they saddened us, they drew us by an invincible instinct to contemplate them, to taste them, to drink them in the forests and the solitudes of the suburbs of Paris. It seemed to us, feeling these irresistible desires awaken within us and projecting distant walks together in the woods of Fontainebleau, of Vincennes, of Saint-Germain, and of Versailles, that we were about to find again our forests and our lakes of the valleys of the Alps. We should see, at least, the same lights and shadows ; we should recognize in the boughs the harmonious sighing of the same winds.

The spring, which restored to the sky its transparency and to the plants their sap, seemed also to render a more palpitating and a fuller youth to Julie's heart. The color in her cheeks became warmer, her eyes more blue and more penetrating. Her voice betrayed more emotion in its accents; her languor breathed more in sighs; there was more elasticity in her walk, more youthfulness in her attitudes. A fever of life agitated her even in the inaction of her chamber. This soft fever hurried the words upon her lips, it gave a restlessness to her feet upon the floor. In the evenings she left her curtains open, she went constantly to lean on the window-sill to inspire the freshness of the water, the light of the moon, the breath of the rural breezes which, coming through the valley of Meudon, were wafted, warm and pleasant, into the apartments on the quay.

"Oh! let us give," said I, "some days of holiday to our souls amidst all our happiness. We, the most feeling and the most grateful of all those beings for whom God reanimates His earth and His skies, let us not be the only ones for whom He revives them in vain. Let us go and immerse ourselves together in this air, in this light, in the verdure, in the reeds, in the ocean of vegetation and of animation which inundates at this moment the world! Let us go and see whether anything has grown older by a day in the works of His creation, if nothing has lowered by a shade or a note

that enthusiasm which sang and sighed, loved and cried in us on the mountains or on the waves of Savoy!"

"Oh! yes, let us go," she replied, "we shall not feel any more keenly, we shall not love each other any more, we shall not bless otherwise; but we shall have rendered one more corner of the earth and of the sky witnesses of the happiness of two poor beings. That temple of our love which was only on those mountains so beloved shall be wherever I have walked and breathed with you."

The old man encouraged these excursions into the fine forests around Paris. He entertained hopes, which the physicians seemed to share, that the country air, the warmth of the sun which strengthens all things, and a moderate amount of exercise in the open fields, might benefit the unhealthy delicacy of Julie's nerves and give elasticity to her heart. Every sunny day during five weeks of the early spring I called for her at her door in the middle of the day. The carriage into which we stepped was closed in order to avoid the looks and the light observations which the passers-by of her acquaintance or unknown persons might be tempted to indulge in on seeing so ravishing a young woman alone with a man of my age. I did not bear enough resemblance to her to pass for her brother. We descended from the carriage at the entrances of the great woods, at the foot of the hills, at the gates of the parks of the suburbs of Paris. We sought out, at Fleury, at Meudon, at Sèvres, at

Chapter LXXXV

We seated ourselves in the shade, by the edge of the alleys. We would open a book, and undertake to read it, but we never got so far as the bottom of the page.





Satory, at Vincennes, the longest and most solitary alleys, carpeted with flowering grasses that the foot of horse never disturbed excepting on the days of the royal hunts. We met only a few children, or a few poor women who turned up the earth with their knives in search of endive. Occasionally a startled doe, brushing through the foliage and bounding across the alleys, would disappear in rapid flight after having stared at us a moment. We walked along in silence, sometimes one preceding the other, sometimes with her hand on my arm. We spoke of the future, of the happiness of possessing all to one's self one of these thousands of unoccupied acres, with a keeper's lodge under one of the old oaks. We dreamed aloud. We gathered violets and wild periwinkles. We made of them hieroglyphs which we exchanged between us. Preserved in the smooth leaves of the hellebore, we linked to each of these letters of flowers some meaning, some souvenir, some look, some sigh, some prayer. We kept them to reperuse when parted. They were destined to recall forever that which we wished never to lose of our delicious communings.

We seated ourselves in the shade, by the edge of the alleys. We would open a book, and undertake to read it, but we never got so far as the bottom of the page. We loved better to read in each other the inexhaustible pages of our own impressions. I would go and get some milk and brown bread at some neighboring farm.

We would eat on the grass, throwing the remains of the beverage to the ants, the crumbs of bread to the little birds. We returned, at sunset, into the tumultuous ocean of Paris; the noise and the crowd caused our hearts to feel oppressed. I left Julie, excited by the joy of the day, at her door; I re-entered, exhausted with happiness, my empty chamber; I would strike the walls, that in crumbling they might open to me the light, the nature, and the love of which they deprived me. I dined without appetite; I read without comprehending. I lit my lamp, and waited, counting the hours, till the evening was far enough advanced that I might venture to return to her door and demand again of the night the converse of the morning.

LXXXVI

The next day we recommenced our wanderings. Ah! how many trunks of trees in those forests are marked by my knife, on the bark, or on the root, with a sign by which I shall ever recognize them! They are those of which she had enjoyed the shade, those at whose feet she had inspired a breath of life, a ray of the sunlight, or a puff of the odor of the wood. The passer-by looks at those trees, without thinking that they are for some

one the columns of a temple of which the worshipper is on the earth and the divinity is in heaven ! I go still to visit them, once or twice each spring, on the anniversaries of our excursions. When the axe shall lay them low, it will seem to me that it will strike myself, and that it will carry away a portion of my heart !

LXXXVII

There is, on the most elevated and usually most solitary summit of the park of Saint-Cloud, at the spot where the top of the hill rounds to fall away in two opposite slopes, one toward the valley of Sèvres, the other toward the hollow where the château stands, an open space formed by the intersection of three long avenues. Here these alleys, encountering each other, form a large green lawn. From this spot the eye can discern at a distance the solitary promenader who may be coming to disturb its morning solitude. This promontory of the hill overlooks the plain of Issy, the course of the Seine, and the road to Versailles. Enclosed by the three points of the forest which advance in the shape of a triangle between the avenues, bathed in the long shadows of the trees which surround it, it seems like the rounded basin of a lake of which the

grass and the foliage are the billows. If one looks toward the valley of Sèvres, there is to be seen only a wide and long sloping meadow. It descends rapidly toward the river like a verdant cascade undulating under the wind. This meadow loses itself at the bottom of the valley in dark masses of thickets stocked with roe-buck. Above these thickets may be seen, on the other side of the Seine, the large roofs of bluish slate and the summits of the majestic trees of the park of Meudon, against the summer sky. It was on this promontory, where one might enjoy at the same time the elevation of a cape, the silence and the shelter of a valley, and the solitude of a desert, that we often came to seat ourselves. The lungs there respire more freely. The ear is less disturbed by earthly sounds. The soul there lifts itself in higher flight over the horizon of life.

We mounted to this place one morning early in May. It was the hour at which the immense forest was peopled only by the deer. They bounded across these deserted alleys. Now and then a gamekeeper crossed them also, like a black spot at the extremity of the horizon. We seated ourselves under the seventh tree in the concave semicircle forming the open space, facing the Sèvres meadow. Centuries have been required to frame the living structure of this oak and its knotted boughs. Its roots, swelling with the sap that nourishes and supports its great trunk, have burst through the earth at its base and covered themselves with cushions of moss; this moss

forms a natural seat of which the oak itself is the back, its lower leaves the canopy.

The morning air was as transparent as the sea-water at sunrise under a verdant cape of one of the islands of the Archipelago. The already heated rays of summer fell from this limpid sky on the wooded hill ; they rose again from the thickets in warm exhalations, like the sun-warmed waves that come to lave in the shadow the feet of the bathers. No other sound was to be heard but the falling of an occasional dead leaf of the preceding winter. They fell, at the pulsations of the sap, at the foot of the tree to give place to the new leaves as yet scarcely developed. Flying birds fluttered through the branches, around their nests, and there was a vague but universal humming of insects, intoxicated with the light, and rising and falling like a living dust at the least undulation of the flowering grass.

LXXXVIII

There was so much sympathy between our youth and this youthfulness of the year and of the day, a so complete harmony between this light, this warmth, this splendor, these silences, these light sounds, this pen-sive rapture of nature and our own feelings ; we felt

ourselves so delightfully mingled and, as it were, transfigured in this air, in this firmament, in this life, in this peace, in this visible immutability of the work of God around us; we possessed each other so perfectly, in this solitude, that our superabundant yet satisfied thoughts and feelings sufficed us. They did not have even the inward labor of seeking for words with which to express themselves. We were like the full vase in which the very fulness renders the liquid motionless. Nothing more could be contained in our hearts. But our hearts were large enough to contain everything. Nothing sought to escape from them. Our breathing was scarcely audible.

I do not know how long a time we remained thus silent and motionless, side by side, seated on the roots of the oak, our hands over our eyes, our heads in our hands, our feet in the sunshine on the grass, and our faces in shadow. But when I lifted my head, the shadow had already retreated as much as the width of a fold of Julie's dress before us on the grass.

I looked at her. She lifted her face as if by the same impulse that had moved me. She looked at me, and without the power to say a word to me suddenly melted into tears. "Why do you weep?" I asked her, with an unquiet emotion, but in a low tone, for fear of troubling and diverting her mute thoughts. "From happiness!" she replied. Her lips smiled while the great tears still ran down her cheeks, glittering like the dew of spring.

"Oh, yes, from happiness," she resumed, "this hour, this day, this heaven, this place, this peace, this silence, this solitude with you! this complete assimilation of our two souls which have no longer need of speech to understand each other and which breathe for both in one sole breath, it is too much! it is too much for a mortal nature, which the excess of joy can extinguish like excess of pain, and which, when it can no longer draw a cry from the heart, sighs that it cannot lament and weeps that it is not able to be sufficiently thankful!"

She stopped for a moment. Her cheeks were flushed. I trembled lest death should seize her in this moment of her expansion. But her voice soon reassured me. "Raphael! Raphael!" she cried, with a solemnity of accent that astonished me, and as if she were announcing to me great tidings, long and painfully waited for; "Raphael! there is a God!"—"And how has He been revealed to you to-day more clearly than on any other day?" I asked her. "Love," she responded, raising slowly toward heaven her beautiful wet eyes; "yes, the love whose torrents I feel flowing in my heart with murmurings, gushing, and a fulness that I have never before felt with the same force and with the same peace. No, I doubt no longer," she continued, with an accent in which certainty mingled with joy, "the spring from which such a felicity could flow into the soul cannot be of this earth, this spring can never be lost after having once gushed forth! There is a God; there is an eternal

love of which ours is only a drop. We will together mingle it one day with the divine ocean from which we have drawn it. This ocean, it is God! I have seen it, I have felt it, I have comprehended it in this moment by my happiness. Raphael! it is no longer you whom I love, it is no longer I whom you love, it is God whom we will adore henceforth, one in the other, you in me and I in you, you and I across those tears of happiness which reveal to us and conceal from us at the same time the immortal fountain of our hearts! Away," she added, with a still greater ardor of look and of accent, "away with the vain names by which we have hitherto called our impulses toward each other! There is no longer but one which will express it; it is that one which has just revealed itself to me in your eyes! God! God! God!" she exclaimed once more, as if she wished to teach herself a new language. "God, it is you! God, it is I for you! God, it is us, and henceforward the feelings which oppress us, one for the other, will be love no longer for us, but a holy and delicious adoration! Raphael, do you understand me? You will be no longer Raphael, you are my worship of God!"

We rose in a transport of enthusiasm. We embraced the rough bark of the tree. We blessed it for the inspiration which had descended on us from its branches. And we gave it a name. We called it the Tree of Adoration! We descended with slow steps the slope of Saint-Cloud to re-enter the noise of Paris. But she

returned with the faith and with the knowledge of God found at last in her heart, and I with the joy of knowing that she had at heart this luminous interior source of consolation, of hope, and of peace.

LXXXIX

In a very short time, the expense I was obliged to incur, but of which I concealed the great inconvenience from Julie, in order to accompany her thus in our almost daily excursions to the country, had so much diminished the proceeds of the sale of my mother's last diamond that I had left but ten louis. I succumbed to an access of despair in counting one evening the very small number of happy days which this feeble sum represented. I should have reddened with shame to have made known the excess of my indigence to her whom I loved. Not rich herself, she would have wished to have given me all that she possessed. This would have degraded in my eyes my relations with her. I loved better my love than life, but I would rather have died than have debased my love.

The sedentary life which I had led all the winter, in the obscurity of my alcove, my intense application to study all day, the tension of one absorbing thought, the absence of sufficient sleep at night, and, above all, the moral exhaustion which the perpetual overflowing of all

the forces of the soul caused a heart too weak to endure a continuous ecstasy of ten months, had undermined my constitution. Under my pale and thin visage, I was no longer but a flame burning unfed. It would end by consuming its own hearth. Julie entreated me to return to my native air, and to preserve my life at the expense even of her happiness. She sent her own doctor to me, to add the authority of science to the entreaties of love. This physician, or rather this friend, Doctor Alain, was one of those men who carry a benediction with them, whose countenances seem to bring a reflection of Heaven into the garrets of the poor whom they visit. A victim himself of an affair of the heart, of a mysterious and pure passion for one of the most beautiful women of Paris, possessed of a little fortune sufficient for his simple wants and for his charities, of an active piety, tender and tolerant, he practised his profession only for the benefit of some friends and of the poor. His physic was only active friendship or charity. This profession is so noble when it is not mercenary; it brings so much into action the human sensibility, that in beginning as a profession it frequently ends as a virtue. With poor Doctor Alain it had become more than a virtue,—a passion for soothing the woes of the soul and the body. They are often so closely related to each other! Alain brought God with him wherever he brought life. He made even Death resplendent with serenity and immortality.

I saw him die, himself, some years later, the death of the righteous and just ; he had served an apprenticeship at many a bedside of death. Helpless on his couch during six months of motionless agony, his eye counted upon a little clock suspended at the foot of his bed the hours which separated him from eternity. He held between his joined hands, crossed on his breast, a crucifix, that emblem of patience. His looks never left this heavenly friend, as if his communion took place at the foot of the cross itself. When his sufferings increased beyond his powers of endurance, he would ask that the crucifix be pressed a moment to his lips, and his groans became lost in his thanksgivings. At last he slept, supported to the end by his hopes and by the good he had done. He had given to the poor and the sick to carry before him to the God of the merciful all his treasures in the shape of good works. He died leaving no inheritance, on a wretched bed, in a garret. The poor bore his body to the grave, and in their turn gave him burial in the grounds of public charity ! O blessed soul ! whose smile I can still see in memory on that countenance lit up by goodness and inward joy, can so much virtue have been for thee but a deception ? hast thou vanished like the reflection of my lamp upon thy portrait when my hand retires the light that aids me to contemplate it ? No, no, God is faithful ! He would not deceive thee, thou who wouldst never willingly deceive a child !

XC

The doctor took the most tender interest in me. It seemed as if Julie had communicated a part of her own tenderness to him. He understood my malady very well, without letting me see that he understood. He was too deeply read in human passions not to recognize its symptoms in us. He ordered me to depart under penalty of death. He induced Julie to enforce his commands by communicating to her his fears. He borrowed the tender authority of love to tear me from love. But he softened the separation by a hope. He directed me to spend some time with my family, and then to return to the baths of Savoy, where Julie would rejoin me by his orders at the commencement of the autumn. His piety did not seem to take alarm at the symptoms of a mutual passion between this young woman and this young man. This pure flame appeared to him to be a fault, but also a purification. His countenance revealed to us only the indulgence of man and the compassion of God. He thus loosened, to save us both, a tie which threatened to strangle us both. I finally consented to depart the first. Julie swore to follow me soon. Alas! her tears, her paleness, the trembling of her lips, swore better even than her words. It was agreed that I should leave Paris as soon as my

strength would permit me to travel. The 18th of May was the day fixed for my departure.

When we had once decided upon this so rapidly approaching separation, we began to reckon the minutes as hours and the hours as days. We would have accumulated and concentrated the years into a second to dispute with and wrench from time the happiness from which we were to be separated during so many months. These days were full of rapture, but also of anguish and agony. We were conscious in each interview, in each look, in each word, in each pressure of the hand, of the cold of the morrow that was approaching. Joys such as these are no longer joys: they are the tortures of the heart and the torments of love!

We consecrated to our adieus the whole of the day which preceded that of my departure. We wished to say this last farewell, not within walls which smother the soul and under the eyes of the importunate which throw the heart back on itself, but under the sky, in the free air, in the light, in the solitude, and in the silence. Nature associates herself with all the sensations of man. She comprehends them, she seems to share them, like an invisible confidante. She carries them up to heaven to gather them there and to make them divine!

XCI

On this morning a carriage, which I had hired for the entire day, called for us. The windows were down, the blinds closed. We traversed the almost deserted streets of the higher quarters of Paris which surround the lofty walls of the park of Monceau. This enclosure, at that time reserved for the use of the princes who owned it, could only be entered by the presentation of tickets of admission, which were very sparingly distributed to a few foreigners or to travellers desirous of admiring this *chef-d'œuvre* of landscape-gardening. I had been able to obtain one of these tickets through one of my mother's early friends, who was attached to the household of these princes. I had chosen this solitude because I knew that the owners were absent, that the admissions were then suspended, and that the very gardeners would be away celebrating a holiday.

This magnificent desert, studded with groves of trees interspersed with lawns, watered by running streams or by still lakes, made poetical by monuments, columns, and ruins, images of time in which art had imitated the decay of the stone-work, and on which the ivy covered the decay, had no other guests on that day than the sunshine, the insects, the birds, and ourselves! Alas!

never were its leaves and its green turf destined to be watered by so many tears!

The warmer and more resplendent the sky, the more delightfully did the light and shadow contest on the lawns under the breath of the spring wind, like the shadows of the wings of a bird which pursues another; the more fervently the nightingales launched their hesitating and enraptured notes into the sonorous air; the more clearly the waters reflected in their polished mirrors the lilies of the valley, the daisies, and the blue periwinkles reversed which carpeted the sloping banks of their basins; the greater this gladness, the more sorrowful were we, and the greater the contrast of this luminous serenity of a spring morning with the sombre cloud which hung over our hearts. In vain did we endeavor to deceive ourselves a moment by calling on each other to admire the beauty of the landscape, the brightness of the flowers, the perfume in the air, the depths of the shadows, the calmness of these sites which might have sufficed to shelter the happiness of an entire world of love. We threw on them, for appearance' sake, an indifferent look; but our eyes almost immediately sought the ground again. Our voices, in responding by idle phrases of joy and admiration, betrayed the hollowness of words and the absence of our thoughts, which were indeed elsewhere!

Vainly also did we seat ourselves alternately beneath the most fragrant lilacs, under the green boughs of the most noble cedars, on the broken and fluted columns

the most ivy-shrouded, on the edges of the ponds the most sheltered in the green swards of their basins, to pass there the long hours of our last communion. Hardly had we chosen one of these sites, when a vague inquietude would force us to quit it to seek another. Here, the shade, there, the light, farther on, the importunate sound of a cascade, or the obstinacy with which the nightingale sang over our heads, rendered for us this exuberance bitter and all this beauty odious. When the heart is sorrowful in the breast, all nature gives us pain. Eden itself would be a torment if it were the scene of the separation of two lovers.

At last, weary of wandering about without being able to find a refuge from ourselves for two hours, we finished by seating ourselves near a little bridge over a stream, at a slight distance one from the other, as if the sound even of our breathing was distressing to us, or as if we instinctively wished to conceal from each other the dull murmur of the inward sobs which we felt ready to burst in our bosoms. We looked long and abstractedly at the green and oily water. It disappeared slowly beneath the arch of the little bridge. It carried along with it sometimes a white petal of a lily fallen from the banks, sometimes an empty and downy bird's-nest which the wind had shaken from the tree. Suddenly we saw floating, the wings motionless and extended, the body of a poor little spring-time swallow. It had been drowned, doubtless, in

drinking, before its wings had become strong enough to bear it. It recalled to our memory the swallow which had fallen dead at our feet one day from the top of the ruined tower of the old château, on the shore of the lake, and which had saddened us as an omen. The dead bird passed slowly before us, and the surface of the water, without raising a ripple, carried it along and engulfed it little by little in the profound darkness of the arch of the bridge. When it had disappeared, we saw another swallow pass and repass a hundred times under the arch, uttering little cries of distress and brushing its wings against the wood-work of the arch. We looked at each other involuntarily. I do not know what our eyes expressed as they met; but this despair of a poor bird found our eyelids so charged and our hearts so ready to break, that we both turned away our faces at the same instant and we burst into sobs, face downward in the grass. One tear called forth another, one thought another thought, one foreboding another foreboding, one sob another. We essayed several times to speak to each other, but the broken accent of the voice of one broke down that of the other; we finished by yielding to nature and by pouring forth in silence, during hours marked only by the shadows, all the tears that rose from their hidden springs. The grass imbibed them, the wind dried them, the earth drank them, God counted them, the rays of the sun carried them away. There remained

no longer a drop of anguish in our two souls when we rose facing each other, almost without seeing each other through the mist in our eyes. These were our farewells; a funereal image, an ocean of tears, an eternal silence. We separated thus, without another look for fear that that look should strike us to the earth. This forlorn garden of our love and of our adieu shall never again see my footsteps.

XCII

The next day I was rolling along in one of those commonplace carriages in which travellers are packed, over the naked hills of the route to the Midi, overwhelmed and silent, my head enveloped in my cloak, between five or six unknown fellow-travellers who were discussing gaily the quality of the wine and the price of the dinner at the inn. I did not open my lips once during this long and dreary journey.

My mother received me with that serene and resigned tenderness which might have made even misfortune happy by her side. I brought back to her only a sick body, vanished hopes, her diamond expended in vain to advance my fortunes, a melancholy which she attributed to my unoccupied youth, to an imagination without

ailment, but of which I carefully concealed from her the true cause, for fear of adding to her sorrows an irremediable grief the more.

I passed the summer alone, at the bottom of a secluded valley between barren mountains where my father had a little manor cultivated by a family of husbandmen. My mother had sent me there and confided me to the care of these honest people that I might get the benefit of the good air and milk. My only occupation was to count the days that separated me from the moment when I should set out to wait for Julie in our dear valley of the Alps. Her letters, which I received and answered every day, confirmed me in my security. She dissipated, by the gaiety and the caresses of her words, the cloud of sinister presentiments which our adieus had left on my soul. Now and then, some phrase of discouragement or of sadness, escaped involuntarily or accidentally forgotten among these vistas of happiness, like a dead leaf amidst the verdant leaves of spring-time, seemed to me somewhat in contradiction with the calmness and flower of health of which she spoke. But I attributed these rare discords to some shadow of memory or to some impatience at the slowness of the days, shadows which had apparently traversed the page while she wrote.

The bracing mountain air, sleep at night, exercise during the day, bodily labor in the garden and in the meadows of my father's farm, above all, the approach

of autumn and the certainty of soon seeing again her on whose regard my life depended, soon restored me to health. I retained no other trace of suffering than a gentle and pensive melancholy which overspread my countenance; it was like the mist of a morning in summer; it was a silence which seemed to contain a mystery, an instinct of solitude which led the superstitious peasants of the mountain to believe that I held converse with the genii of the woods.

All ambition was destroyed in me by my love. I had accepted my poverty and my obscurity forever as the portion of my life. The pious and serene resignation of my mother had finished by penetrating my spirit with her sweet and holy words. I entertained no other dream than that of working ten or eleven months of the year, with my hands or with my pen, to earn enough to enable me to pass a month or two near Julie in each year; then, if the old man's protection should fail her some day, to consecrate myself as a slave to her service, like Rousseau to Madame de Warens; to take shelter with her in some secluded cottage of these mountains, or in one of the well-known chalets of our Savoy; to there live for her, as she would live for me, without looking back with regret to this empty world, and without demanding of love itself any other recompense than the happiness of loving!——

XCIII

One thing only served to harshly recall me not unfrequently from this dreamland,—that was the cruel penury to which my paternal household had fallen in consequence of the unavailing expense incurred for me. The harvests had failed several years in succession; reverses of fortune had transformed the humble mediocrity of my parents' means almost into actual distress. Each time that I went to see my mother, on Sunday, she disclosed her troubles to me, and wept before me tears that she concealed from my father and my sisters. I was reduced, myself, to an extreme destitution. I lived, at the little farm, only on brown bread, milk, and the eggs of the poultry-yard. I had sold secretly, and one by one, in the neighboring town, all the books and clothes I had brought from Paris, in order to have means to pay the postage of Julie's letters, for which I would have sold the drops of my heart's blood.

The month of September was drawing to its close. Julie wrote me that her anxieties on the score of her husband's health, which declined from day to day (Oh! pious fraud of love to conceal her own sufferings and to lighten my cares), would detain her longer in Paris than she had expected. But she urged me to set out myself,

without delay, and go to Savoy to await her there. She would certainly join me there toward the end of October. This letter was full of the most tender recommendations, as from a sister to a cherished brother. She entreated me, in ordering me by the sovereign authority of her love, to beware of that insidious disease which often lurks beneath the appearance of the most blooming youth, only to wither and consume it at the moment when itself is thought to have been finally overcome. This letter also enclosed a consultation and a prescription from her physician and mine, the compassionate Doctor Alain. This prescription directed me, in the most imperative manner and with the most alarming menaces, to take a long season at the baths of Aix. I showed this prescription of the good doctor to my mother, as an excuse for my departure. It gave her so much heartfelt anxiety that she did not cease to join her prayers to the injunctions of the physician to induce me to go. But, alas! I had addressed myself in vain to a few friends as poor as myself and to some pitiless usurers to obtain the trifling sum of twelve louis required for my journey. My father had been absent for six months, and my mother did not wish, under any circumstances, to aggravate his distress and his anxieties by asking him for money. He could not have borrowed it without exposing a poverty by which he was already too much humiliated. I had made up my mind to start with only two or three louis in my purse, in the hope that I should be able to borrow the

remainder from my friend Louis at Chambéry. But, a few days before my departure, my mother, during a sleepless night, found in her heart a resource that a mother's heart alone could have furnished.

XCIV

There stood, in one of the corners of the little garden which enclosed on two sides our paternal mansion, a little grove of trees, comprising two or three lime-trees, an evergreen, and seven or eight twisted yoke-elms, the remnant of a wood planted centuries ago, and which had doubtless been respected as the *genius loci* when the hill had been cleared, the house built, and the garden walled in. These noble trees were the family salon in the open air in summer-time. Their budding in spring-time, their tints in the autumn, their dead leaves in winter replaced by the hoar-frost which they bore on their old boughs like honorable white locks, marked the seasons for us. Their shadows, which rolled back under their very feet or lengthened out on the grassy border around, marked the hours for us better than a dial. My mother had nursed us, cradled us, taught us to walk under their leaves. My father seated himself there on his return from the chase, book in hand, his shining gun

suspended from a branch, his panting hounds lying near his bench. I myself had there passed my fairest youthful hours, with Homer or Telemachus lying open on the grass before me. I loved to stretch myself on the warm turf, leaning on my elbows over the volume, of which the flies or the lizards would sometimes hide the lines from my eyes. The nightingales there sang for the household without our being able ever to discover their nest, or even from which bough their song burst forth. This grove was the pride, the souvenir, the love of all. The idea of converting it into a little bag of money which would leave no memory in the heart, no joy and no shade for evermore, would never have occurred to any one, save to a mother trembling with apprehension for the life of her only son: this idea came to my mother. With that instinctive promptitude and firmness of resolution which characterized her, fearing also, doubtless, that remorse might seize her, or that my tender remonstrances would have arrested her if she waited to consult me, she summoned the wood-cutters at early morning and saw the axe laid at their roots, weeping and turning away her head that she might not hear the sighing or the fall of these old guardians of her youth on the echoing and naked soil of the garden.

XCV

When, on the following Sunday, in returning to M——, my eye sought from the top of the mountain the group of trees which stood out so pleasantly on the hill-side, and protected from the sun a portion of the gray wall of the house, I thought I was dreaming when I perceived in their place only a pile of fallen trunks, of barked and bleeding branches strewing the earth, and the sawing-trestle of the woodmen, like an instrument of torture, grinding and devouring their limbs with its teeth. I hurried with extended arms toward the outer wall; I opened, trembling, the little gate of the garden—— Alas! there remained standing only the evergreen, a lime-tree, and the oldest of the elms, under which the bench had been drawn. “That is enough,” said my mother, coming to me and throwing herself in my arms, concealing her tears, “the shadow of one tree is as good as that of a forest. And besides, what shadow is worth to me anything by the side of yours. Do not reproach me, I have written to your father that the trees were spreading at the top, and that they were harmful to the kitchen-garden. Do not say anything more of them!”—— Then, drawing me into the house, she opened her secretary and drew forth a bag half filled with money; “take it,” she said, “and set

out. The trees will have been amply paid for if you return well and happy !”

I took the bag, reddening and sobbing. There were in it six hundred francs. But I resolved to return them all to my poor mother.

I started on foot, with leathern gaiters on my legs and my gun on my shoulder, like a sportsman. I had taken from her bag but a hundred francs, which I added to the small sum I already had and to the proceeds of the sale of my last works, so that I might cost my mother nothing. The price of those trees would have overwhelmed me. I left it hidden at the farm, that at my return I might restore it to her who had so heroically wrested it from her heart for me. I ate and slept at the humblest inns in the villages. I was taken for a poor Swiss student returning from the University of Strasbourg. I was charged only for the exact value of the bread I had eaten, of the candle I had burned, of the pallet on which I slept. I carried with me but one book, which I read in the evenings, seated on the bench before the door. It was a copy of *Werther*, in German, and these unknown characters tended to confirm my hosts in the opinion that I was a foreign traveller.

I traversed thus the long and picturesque gorges of Bugey ; I crossed the Rhône at the foot of the rock of Pierre-Châtel. The embanked river washes the base of this rock eternally with a current as wearing as a millstone and as cutting as a knife, as if to bring down that

State prison which saddens its course with its shadow. I climbed slowly the Mont du Chat by the paths of the chamois-hunters. When I arrived at the summit, I perceived below me the valleys of Aix, of Chambéry, of Annecy, in the distance, and at my feet the lake, dappled with rosy tints by the floating rays of the evening sun. It seemed to me that one single figure filled, for my vision, the immensity of this horizon. It rose from the chalets where we had met; from the garden of the old physician, of which I recognized the pointed roof of slate over the smoke of the town; from the fig-trees of the little donjon of Bon-Port, at the bottom of the opposite cove; from the chestnut-trees on the hill of Tresserves; from the woods of Saint-Innocent; from the isle of Châtillon; from the boats returning to their moorings; from this land, from this sky, from these waves. I fell on my knees before this horizon filled with one image; I opened my arms and closed them again, as if I embraced her soul in thus embracing the air which had passed over all these scenes of our happiness, over all these traces of her footsteps. I seated myself later behind a rock covered with box, which prevented even the goats from seeing me as they passed in the foot-paths.

There I remained, sunk in contemplation and in memories until the sun almost touched the snowy summits of Nivolex. I did not wish either to cross the lake or to enter the town by daylight. The rusticity of my

costume, the poverty of my purse, the frugality of life to which necessity condemned me in order that I might live near her for a few months, would have seemed too strange to the inmates, and to the guests of the old doctor's household. All this would contrast too strongly with the elegance of dress, of habits, and of life which I had displayed there the previous year. I should have embarrassed those whom I might accost in appearing in the streets as a young man who had not even the means to lodge himself in a respectable hotel in this resort of luxury. My resolution had been taken to slip by night into the suburb of thatched cottages which borders the rivulet among the orchards in the lower part of the town.

I knew there a poor young servant-girl named Fanchette. She had married one of the boatmen the preceding year. She had reserved one or two beds in the garret of her cottage so that she might there board and lodge one or two poor invalids at fifteen sous a day. I had engaged one of these beds and a place at the poor table of this good servant, enjoining her to secrecy. My friend Louis, of Chambéry, to whom I had written, indicating the day of my arrival at the lake, had come himself, several days before, and had notified Fanchette and taken my lodging. I had requested him, in addition, to receive at his address at Chambéry the letters which might come to me from Paris. He was to forward them to me by the drivers of the light carts that run

perpetually between the two towns. I intended, during my stay in Aix, to remain in the daytime in the little chamber of the cottage in the suburbs, or in the neighboring orchards, and only to issue forth after nightfall. I would ascend outside of the town to the house of the old doctor, and entering by the garden-gate which opens on the country, would there pass the solitary hours of the evenings in delightful intercourse. I would be happy to endure this restraint and this humiliation a thousand times recompensed by those hours of love. I should thus conciliate, as I thought, the duty of respect for the sacrifice made by my poor mother with my devotion to the idol I came to worship.

XCVI

From a pious superstition of love I had regulated my pace on my long pedestrian journey so as to arrive on the other side of the Mont du Chat, at the abbey of Haute-Combe, on the anniversary of the day on which the miracle of our first meeting and the revelation of our two hearts had taken place in the poor little inn of the fishers, on the borders of the lake. It seemed to me that days have their destinies, like other mortal

things, and that in finding again the same sun, the same month, the same date, in the same spot, I should find something of her I regretted. It would at least be an augury of our speedy and lasting reunion.

XCVII

From the brink of the perpendicular cliffs which descend from the summit of the Mont du Chat to the lake, I perceived already, at my left, the ancient ruins and the long shadows of the abbey which darkened a vast extent of the water. In a few minutes I had reached it. The sun was descending behind the Alps. The long twilight of autumn was enveloping the mountains, the shore, and the waves. I did not stop at the ruins; I traversed rapidly the orchard where we had sat at the foot of the haystack, near the beehives. The beehives and the haystacks were still there; but there was no light to be seen in the window of the little inn, nor smoke over the roof, nor nets suspended to dry on the palisades of the garden.

I knocked at the door; there was no reply. I shook the wooden latch, and the door opened of itself. I entered the little room with the smoky walls. The

hearth was swept clean, even to the very ashes; the table and the other furniture had been removed. The flagstones of the floor were strewn with straws and feathers fallen from five or six empty swallows' nests suspended like a cornice from the blackened beams of the ceiling.

I mounted the wooden ladder attached to the wall by an iron pin and which served as a stairway to the upper chamber in which Julie had awakened from her long unconsciousness with her hand on my forehead; I entered it as one would enter a sanctuary or a sepulchre. I looked around it; the wooden beds, the closets, the stools, had all disappeared. A night-bird, flapping his wings heavily at the sound of my footsteps, beat the walls with his pinions and escaped, uttering a cry, by the open window looking on the orchard. I could hardly recognize the place where I had knelt during that terrible and delicious night at the foot of the bed, or of the coffin, of the young sleeper. I stooped and kissed the floor there. I seated myself for a long time on the edge of the window, endeavoring to restore in my memory the room, the furniture, the bed, the lamp, the hours, which had kept their place in me although everything had been displaced during a year of absence.

There was no one in the deserted neighborhood of the house who could give me any information on the causes of its abandonment. I conjectured, from the heaps of fagots which remained in the yard, from the pigeons and fowls which returned of themselves to

roost in the room or on the roof, and from the stacks of hay and straw untouched in the orchard, that the family had gone off to assist in gathering the late harvests on the mountain, and that they had not yet redescended.

This solitude, of which I had thus taken possession, seemed to me mournful,—less sad, however, than would have been the presence and the footsteps of the indifferent in this place sacred to me. I should have been obliged to control before them my eyes, my voice, my gestures, and the impressions that assailed me.

I resolved to pass the night there. I brought up a bundle of fresh straw, which I spread on the floor, on the very spot where Julie had slept her death-like sleep. I leaned my gun against the wall; I drew from my knapsack a piece of bread and some goat's-cheese that I had purchased at Seyssel to sustain me on the road. I went to take my supper on the green platform above the ruins of the abbey, at the edge of the spring which flows and ceases alternately, as if it were an intermittent breathing of the mountain.

XCVIII

From the edge of that platform, and from the dismantled terraces of the old monastery, the eye embraces at these hours of evening the most enchanting horizon that ever delighted a solitary, a contemplative man, or a lover; the green and humid shade of the mountain behind one, with the murmur of its spring and the rustling of its foliage; the ruins, the sections of walls festooned with ivy, the arcades full of night and of mystery; the lake and its dying waves rolling slowly up one by one their little fringes of foam like the folds of the cover of its couch, as if to deepen its slumber upon its bed of fine sand, at the foot of the rocks. On the opposite shore, the blue mountains draped in transparent shadows; on the right, as far as the eye can reach, the luminous track that the sun traces and empurples on the water and on the sky in retiring from them its splendor. I plunged myself into these shadows and into this light, into these shades and these waves, I incorporated in myself this nature, and I thought thus to incorporate in myself the image of her who was all this nature to me. I said to myself: "I saw her there! There is the space that separated me from her boat when I perceived it struggling against the tempest. There is the shore on which she landed! There is the

orchard where we shared with each other that long confidence, in the sun, and where she returned to life to give me two lives ! There, in the distance, are the tops of the poplars of the long avenue which unfolds itself like a green serpent issuing from the water. There are the chalets, the stretches of turf, the clumps of chestnut-trees, the hollow roads upon the most distant slopes of the mountains in which I gathered for her the flowers, the strawberries, and the chestnuts with which I filled her lap ! Here, she said this to me ; there, I confessed to her such a one of my soul's secrets ; in the other place, we remained silent a whole evening, our eyes on the setting sun, our hearts flooded with enthusiasm, our lips without language. On that wave, she wished to die. On that beach, she promised me to live. Under that grove of walnut-trees, then leafless, she said farewell to me and promised that I should see her again before the new leaves should have yellowed ! They are now on the point of turning yellow again. But Love is as faithful as nature :—in a few days I shall see her again.— I already see her, for am I not already here waiting for her, and waiting for her thus, is that not already seeing her again ? ”

XCIX

Then I pictured to myself the moment when, in my walks behind the orchards shaded by the walnut-trees which descend from the mountain behind the old doctor's garden, I should see at last open for the first time the window of that closed chamber where she was expected, and a woman's face, half hidden in its long black hair, appear between the curtains, dreaming of that brother sought by her eyes in that nature wherein she, too, saw only him.— And my heart, at this image, beat so impetuously in my breast that I was obliged to drive away the fancy for a moment that I might breathe.

In the meantime, the night had almost entirely descended from the mountain upon the lake. One could only see the waters through a mist of light and shade that darkened over their wide expanse.

Amidst the profound and universal silence which preceded darkness, the regular sound of two oars which seemed to be approaching the shore struck my ear.

Soon I could perceive a small movable spot on the water, gradually increasing in size, and which glided, throwing a slight fringe of foam on each side, into the little cove near the fisherman's little house.

Thinking that it might be the fisher himself, returning from the Savoy coast to his deserted dwelling, I descended rapidly from the ruins to the shore so as to meet him when his boat landed. I waited on the sand till he should arrive.

C

As soon as he saw me, "Monsieur," he cried, "are you the young Frenchman who is expected at Fanchette's, and to whom I have been directed to give this paper?" Speaking thus, he threw himself into the water, half-leg deep, and wading toward me handed me a thick letter. I felt from the weight of it that this letter contained several others. I hurriedly opened the first envelope and read with difficulty by the light of the moon a note from my friend Louis, dated that morning at Chambéry. In it he said that my lodging had been engaged and prepared for me in the house of the poor servant in the suburbs; that no one had yet arrived from Paris at the house of our friend, the old doctor; that, knowing from myself that I would be in the evening at Haute-Combe, and that I would pass there the night and a part of the following day, he had taken advantage of the departure of a reliable

boatman who would pass below the abbey to send me the package of letters received within the last two days, and for which I must be famished ; that he himself would come to seek me the following evening at Haute-Combe ; that we would cross the lake and enter the town together, under cover of the night.

CI

While reading this note, I held the package with a trembling hand. It seemed to me heavy as my fate. I hastened to pay and dismiss the boatman, who was impatient to be off so as to be able to get out of the lake and into the Rhône before complete darkness overtook him ; I asked of him only a candle-end to enable me to read my letters, which he gave me. I heard again the sound of his oars disappearing on the surface of the profound waters. I re-entered, leaping with joy, the upper chamber where I had prepared my straw bed. I was about to see again the holy handwriting of this angel, in the very spot where she had manifested herself to me in her splendor and in her love. I did not doubt that one of these letters would inform me that she had departed from Paris and that she was approaching.

I seated myself on the heap of straw, I lit my candle by burning a priming of my gun; I unsealed the envelope. It was not till this moment that I perceived that the seal of the first letter was black, and that the address was in the handwriting of Doctor Alain. This sign of mourning, in place of the joy that I was expecting, made me shiver. The other letters, contained in a separate fold, slipped from my hand on my knees. I dared not read a word more, for fear of finding—— alas! that which neither the hand, the eyes, the blood, the tears, the earth, nor the heavens, could evermore efface—— Death! I read, however, with a shaking of my soul which made the syllables dance on the paper, these sole words:

“Be a man! resign yourself to the will of Him whose ways are not our ways; do not longer expect any one!—— Do not seek her again in this world; she has remounted to heaven, calling on your name.—— Thursday, at sunrise.—— She told me all, before dying.—— She charged me to send to you her last thoughts which she was writing up to the moment when her hand grew cold over your name.—— Love her in that Christ who loved us even unto death, and live for your mother!——

“ALAIN.”

CII

I fell back senseless on the straw. I only returned to consciousness with the icy freshness of the wind of midnight on my face. The candle was still burning. The physician's letter was clasped convulsively between my fingers. The package, intact, had rolled from my lap to the floor. I opened it with my lips, as though I feared to profane, in breaking it with my fingers, this seal of a message from Heaven. There dropped out on my knees several long letters, written in Julie's hand. These letters were arranged in the order of their dates.

In the first there was :

“Raphael! oh, my Raphael! oh, my brother! forgive your sister for having so long deceived you!—— I have never hoped to see you again in Savoy!—— I knew that my days were numbered, and that I should not live for this happiness!—— When I said to you *Au Revoir*, Raphael, at the gate of the garden of Monceau, you did not comprehend me, but God himself comprehended me. I meant, to meet again! to bless! to love eternally, in the heavens! Dear child! I persuaded Dr. Alain to deceive you also, and to aid me in inducing you to leave Paris. It was my wish, it was my duty, to spare you this intimate anguish which would have destroyed part of your heart

and all of your strength!—— And then, again,—— forgive me once more, I will tell you everything;—I did not wish that you should see me die,—— I desired to have a veil between us a little while before death!—— Ah! death is so cold!—— I feel it, I see it, I shudder at myself!—— Raphael! I wished to leave in your eyes an image of beauty which you could always contemplate and adore! But now, do not set out!—— do not go to wait for me in Savoy! Yet a few days—— two or three perhaps—— and you need not wait for me anywhere! But I shall be there, Raphael! I shall be everywhere, and always where you are——”

This letter had been all moistened with large drops of tears. They had unglazed and stiffened the paper.

There was in the other, dated the following day:

“MIDNIGHT.

“Raphael! your prayers have drawn down upon me a blessing from Heaven. I thought yesterday of the Tree of Adoration, at Saint-Cloud, at the foot of which I saw God through your soul. But there is one still more divine, the tree of the Cross!—— I have embraced it—— I will never separate from it again! Oh! how well one is beneath that blood and those tears, which cleanse and purify!—— Yesterday, I sent for a holy priest of whom Alain had spoken. He is an old man, who knows all things and pardons all things!——

I opened my soul to him, he shed on it the love and the life of God.—— Oh! how good He is, this God! how indulgent! how full of loving-kindness! how little we know Him! He permits me to love you! that you should be my brother! that I should be your sister here below if I live; your angel up there, if I die!—— Oh, Raphael! let us love Him, since He permits that we should love one another as we do!——”

There was at the bottom a little cross, and something like the impression of a kiss all around it.

CIII

There was another letter, written in an entirely changed hand and in which the letters crossed and mingled on the page, as if traced in the dark, which said :

“Raphael! I wish to say to you one more word. To-morrow, perhaps, I could not. When I am dead, do not die yourself. I shall watch over you from above. I shall be good and powerful, as the God is good to whom I am to be reunited!—— Love still, after I am gone—— God will send you another sister, who will

be, moreover, a pious companion for your life—— I will ask it of Him myself—— Do not fear to grieve my soul, Raphael—— I, jealous in heaven of your happiness?—— I feel better after having said this to you. Alain will send you these thoughts of mine, and a lock of my hair. I am going to sleep !——”

Another, finally, almost illegible, contained only some broken lines :

“Raphael ! Raphael ! where are you ? I felt myself strong enough to get out of my bed—— I said to the woman who watches over me that I wished to be left alone to rest. I have dragged myself, by the light of the lamp, from one piece of furniture to another to the table at which I write,—— but I no longer see it—— my eyes swim in the darkness—— I see black spots floating on the paper—— Raphael, I can no longer write—— Oh ! at least this one word more !——”

Then there were in large letters, like those of a child who tries to write for the first time, these two words, which took up an entire line and filled all the bottom of the page :

“Raphael ! Farewell !”

CIV

All these letters fell from my hands. I was sobbing without tears when I perceived another little note, in the handwriting of the old man, her husband. This note had slipped between the pages as I was unsealing the second envelope.

There were in it only these words:

“She breathed her last, her hand in mine, a few hours after writing you her last farewell. I have lost my daughter—— be my son for the few days I have yet to live. She is there, upon her bed, as if asleep, with an expression on her features as of one whose last thoughts smiled at seeing something beyond our world. Never have I seen her so beautiful. In looking at her, I feel the need of believing in immortality. I have loved you because of her. For her sake, love me!”

CV

It is something strange and very fortunate for human nature that it is so impossible to believe immediately in the complete disappearance of a much-loved being. Though the evidences of her death lay scattered around me, I could not yet conceive that I was forever separated from her. Her remembrance, her image, her features, the sound of her voice, the peculiar turn of her expressions, the charm of her face, were so present to me, and, as it were, so ceaselessly incorporated in me, that it seemed to me that she was there more than ever; that she surrounded me, that she conversed with me, that she called me by my name, and that when I rose I would go to rejoin her and to see her again. It is a certain space which God leaves between the certainty of the loss and the consciousness of its reality; something like that which the senses themselves interpose between the stroke of the axe which the eye sees fall on the tree-trunk and the sound of the blow which comes to the ear later. This distance deadens grief, by cheating it. For some time after having lost the loved one we have not altogether lost her; we live on by the prolongation of her life in us. We have a feeling comparable to that which the eye experiences when it has been fixed for a long time on the setting sun. Although the orb

has disappeared below the horizon, its rays have not yet vanished from our sight; they shine still a long time in our soul. It is only gradually, and in proportion as the impressions are extinguished and become more distinct as they cool, that we arrive at the conscious and complete separation, and that we can say: "She is dead in me!" For death is not death; it is oblivion!

I experienced this phenomena of grief in myself that night, in all its strength. God was not willing that I should drain my cup of woe at one draught, for fear that my whole soul would be drowned therein. He gave me, and He left me for a long time, the illusion and the conviction of the presence within me, around me, and before me, of the celestial being whom He had shown me but for one year, in order, doubtless, that during the rest of my life my eyes and my thoughts should be constantly directed toward that heaven to which He had recalled her in her spring-time and in her love!

When the poor boatman's candle was burned out, I took up my letters and hid them in my breast. A thousand times I kissed the floor of this chamber which had been the cradle of our love and which had become its sepulchre; I took my gun and I went out into the night, mechanically and like one distracted, traversing the gorges of the mountain. The night was sombre. The wind had risen. The waves

of the lake, driven against the rocks, struck them with such hollow blows and sent forth sounds so like human voices, that I stopped many times quite breathless and turned, as if some one had called me by name.—Yes, I was called, I was not mistaken, but the voice came from Heaven!

CVI

You know, my friend, by whom I was found the next morning, wandering at the bottom of a precipice, in the mists of the Rhône. You know by whom I was raised up, supported, brought back to the arms of my poor mother——

And now, ten years have rolled by without being able to carry away with them one of those memories of that grand year of my youth. According to Julie's promise to send me from on high some one to console me, God has replaced his gift by another,—He has not withdrawn it. I often return, with her who has made my hopes as patient and gentle as felicity, to visit the valley of Chambéry and the lake of Aix. When I seat myself on the heights of the hill of Tresserves, at the foot of those chestnut-trees which have

felt her heart beat against their rough bark ; when I look at this lake, these mountains, these snows, these meadows, these trees, these jagged rocks uplifted in a warm atmosphere which seems to bathe the entire earth in liquid perfume like amber ; when I hear the leaves rustle, the insects murmur, the breeze sigh, and the waves of the lake break gently on their shores with the sound of a silken stuff unrolling fold by fold ; when I see the shadow of her whom God has made my companion to the end of my days outlined by the side of mine, on the sand or on the grass ; when I feel within me a plenitude that desires nothing before death, and a peace untroubled by a single sigh,—then I seem to see the blessed soul of her who one day appeared to me in these places rise dazzling and immortal from every point of this horizon, fill, of herself alone, this sky and these waters, shine in these splendors, permeate this ether, burn in these fires, penetrate these waves, respire in these murmurs, pray, praise, chant in that hymn of life which flows with the cascades of these glaciers into these lakes, and shed upon this valley and upon those who keep her in memory a benediction which may be seen by the eye, heard by the ear, and felt in the heart !

(Here Raphael's manuscript ended.)

List of Illustrations

RAPHAEL

	PAGE
DEATH FORESTALLED	<i>Fronts.</i>
IN THE FISHERMAN'S GARRET	48
RAPHAEL READS HIS POEM	104
RAPHAEL WATCHES JULIE'S HOME-COMING	144
WANDERING IN THE FOREST	224

